

**ADVANCED STUDY IN THE
HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA**

VOLUME I

(1707-1813)

ADVANCED STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA

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Preface to Second Edition

I am thankful to my Publishers for thorough editing and further improvement in the get up of this volume. The matter has also been completely revised and many new additions made to make it more trustworthy both for its facts and details.

G. S. Chhabra

Preface to First Edition

This volume starts with the study of the declining years of the Mughals in India, discusses how from Mughal ruins the Maratha power, among others, emerged which carried with itself the seeds of its decay, and traces the steady growth of the English power which humbled its European rivals; put the sagacity and far-sightedness of its leaders in India to a good account; and supplanting one Indian power after another, shaped itself into a supreme and sovereign authority which just fell short of its consummation when the superiors in England foolishly intervened and recalled Wellesley in an ignorant despair. In this whole drama of the rise and fall of the political powers staged on the Indian soil, the one perceptible fact which a non-sceptic may find difficult to escape is the mysterious force which one may call destiny or some divine agency, and which brought victories to the British often without fighting for them, and despite the British Parliamentary enactments against territorial expansion and acquisition of unnecessary power. The book needs to be read than explained, as it draws its information from all the available primary and secondary published works and gives it a form so as to suit the requirements of the advanced students of this subject, here and there giving an interpretation or throwing an idea which may arouse the imagination of the worthier minds so that the cause of History is served the better.

G. S. Chhabra

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The Decline of the Mughals

Aurangzeb had five sons. But being a suspicious man, for he had imprisoned his father to capture the throne for himself, he relied on none. The slightest hint, real or imaginary, of a discord on their part, startled him like a hare, and he witnessed on them exemplary punishments which often made others pity their lot of being the sons of an emperor. Prince Mohammad Sultan, the eldest son, thus having somehow displeased the Emperor's fancy, found himself landed in the jail where he died a wreck twenty years after Aurangzeb had come to power. His second son, Muazzam, had suffered an imprisonment for seven long years on a ground which probably anybody but he should have considered rather flimsy. Azam Shah, the third son, was often rebuked bitterly and never permitted to come too close. The fourth son, Akbar, had to flee the country to escape the father's wrath for his compromising attitude towards Rajputs, and take refuge in Persia where he died in 1706, a year before Aurangzeb himself was removed by destiny from an empire which he ever had valued more than any principle of morality or religion. Kam Baksh, the youngest son also had tasted a solitary confinement for two years and was equal with all others of his brothers none of whom could develop the confidence and qualities of a ruling prince. The Mughal power had the quality of sharp decline writ large on its face when Aurangzeb died in 1707.

AURANGZEB'S SUCCESSORS

Bahadur Shah (1707-1712)

When the Emperor Aurangzeb died, he left behind him a will, dividing the whole of his empire among his surviving sons. None of them, however, was willing to suffer such diminution of power. A war of succession was fought, in which Muazzam defeated and killed his only serious rival brother Azam Shah at Jajnan and ascended the throne under the title of Bahadur Shah at the age of 63. Kam Baksh was also later on mortally wounded in the battlefield, and the new Emperor now busied himself in appeasing his supporters and building around him the life of a blissful ease which

ultimately earned him the title of *Shah-i-Bekhabar*, or an emperor who is completely ignorant of what is going on around him.

Bahadur Shah was a Shia by faith, and this led to the development of two parties in his court, the Irani party which consisted of the nobles like Asad Khan and his son Zulfikar Khan who professed the Shia faith, and the Turani party which consisted of the powerful nobles like Chin Qilch Khan and Ghazi-ud-Din Feroz Jang who followed the Sunni beliefs of Islam. This developed political strife in the country and further weakened the Mughal Empire.

Bahadur Shah was not a staunch Muslim like his father Aurangzeb, and he started a policy of toleration towards the other faiths. But it was too late. While the new policy alienated those who had developed a vested interest in Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecutions, it could not appease those towards whom it was followed. For the Rajputs, the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and others had too long suffered under the galling yoke of the ruthless monarchs. A mere change in their policies could bring them no satisfaction when they were bent upon destroying the Mughal power itself and establishing their respective independence. In vain did the new Emperor try to control the disruptive forces by force, fraud and cajolery. The Rajputs were not curbed, the Marathas under Shahu were set on a career of conquests and expansion which soon was to bring their arms right up to Delhi, and the Sikhs under the leadership of Banda Bahadur in Punjab were bent upon wreaking vengeance on those who had been responsible for so much suffering to their Guru Gobind Singh and his family.

One part of the country after another continued falling out of the central control of the Mughals, while Bahadur Shah by his extravagance and over appeasement of his supporters continued marching towards helplessness and ruin. Every one among the Emperor's nobles was busy making hay while the sun shone. It was in these circumstances that Bahadur Shah died in 1712, followed, as usual, by a war of succession among his sons, of whom Jahandar Shah ascended the throne at Delhi, after much bloodshed.

THE SAYYAD BROTHERS

Jahandar Shah 1712-1713

We have earlier examined the development of two parties, or rather factions at the Mughal court in the time of Bahadur Shah, namely the Irani and the Turani. These two parties constituted the foreign elements like the Arabs, Rumis, Habshis, Afghans and others with whose help the Mughal emperors like Aurangzeb tried to conquer the Hindu and Muslim states of India. All the important nobles of the Mughal court, such as Chin Qilch Khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Asaf Jah belonged to one or the other of these two parties, while

the Muslims born in India and the Hindus of this country occupied only an inferior position.

A remarkable feature of the period under study is the development of a purely Hindustani party, which consisted of the Muslims born in India, either converted from other Indian faiths, or descendants of the foreign Muslims who had settled down in this country two or three generations earlier. These Muslims were Shias, as against the Mughals most of whom were Sunnis, and had the support also of the Jats, Rajputs and other powerful Hindu princes. This Hindustani party was headed by the Sayyad Brothers.

The two Sayyad Brothers claimed their descent from an adventurer, Sayyad Abdul Farah, who had come from Wasit, Mesopotamia, and settled down near Patiala in the Punjab many years earlier. About the time they came into prominence in the central politics, the elder brother, Abdulla Khan, was the Deputy Governor at Allahabad ; while his younger brother, Hussain Khan, was occupying a similar post in Bihar.

These two brothers had rendered a great help to Bahadur Shah in the battle of Jajan which won them their present offices. Bahadur Shah's successor Jahandar Shah, however, aroused their enmity as a result of his refusal to patronise them. Bahadur Shah had three other sons besides Jahandar Shah who succeeded him. They were, Azam-us-Shan, Rafi-us-Shan and Jahan Shah, all of whom were defeated and killed before Jahandar came to power. But the latter had no head for administration, and as soon as he came to power, he transferred all his powers into the hands of those who had supported his cause, and himself fell into the company of revellers abandoning himself completely to wine and beautiful women. One such woman, a dancing girl named Lal Kunwar, charmed him completely out of his senses, her relatives were raised to important positions which aroused the jealousy of others and the Mughal court in Delhi became a hot-bed of intrigue. One of his nephews, Farrukh Siyar, the second son of Azam-us-Shan wanting to take advantage of the situation, won the Sayyad Brothers over to his side and marched to Delhi. His progress was easy, Jahandar Shah fled and Farrukh occupied the throne. Jahandar was later on arrested and handed over to Farrukh who had him put to death on 11 February, 1713.

Farrukh Siyar 1713-1719

Farrukh Siyar who thus became the next Mughal Emperor of India in 1713, had won his victory entirely due to the support of the Sayyad Brothers whom he duly rewarded by appointing the elder one Abdulla Khan, as the Wazir of his empire ; while the younger brother, Hussain Ali was appointed the Mir Bakshi. They were also appointed the Governors of Multan and Bihar respectively; their uncle Muzaffar Khan was made the Governor of Ajmer and many

of their other relatives also got positions in different departments of the government.

The Sayyad Brothers had won all these rewards not as the result of a long enduring friendship which might have existed between them on the one hand and the Emperor Farrukh Siyar on the other. Theirs, in fact, was a too convenient alliance. The Mughal princes, as already alluded to, were too much in the hands of the Irani and Turani nobles. This sudden rise to power of the Indian Muslims was bound to arouse the jealousy of the foreign elements at the Mughal court, and the new Emperor's ears began immediately to be poisoned against them. The mutual distrust in fact existed right from the start, and it had made its appearance even during their triumphant march to Delhi. Due to their mutual interests, however, it was not permitted to flare up at that time. But once things settled in Delhi, it started getting out of control. Farrukh Siyar was only a thirty-year-old young man when he became the new Emperor. Since 1707 he had been the Governor of Bengal, but he himself was neither a good administrator, nor had he kept himself quite in touch with the central politics in Delhi. His inexperience and incapability led the Sayyad Brothers to develop an independence of action which was disliked alike by the old nobles and the Emperor himself who now started planning the destruction of his benefactors.

On three different occasions, at least, the Emperor plotted against the Sayyad Brothers which served only to expose him, and to exhaust the Brothers' patience, and to spell ultimately his own ruin. On one occasion, thus, he asked Hussain Ali to march against the Rajputs, but secretly informed the Rajput chief Raja Ajit Singh that the Sayyad did not enjoy his support, and that he would be duly rewarded if he was able to bring about his destruction. On another occasion Hussain Ali was appointed Viceroy in the Deccan, but when he marched to take charge of the office, Daud Khan Panni who was in charge of it was secretly asked to resist and somehow to end the Sayyad's life, for which he would be confirmed in latter's post. On yet another occasion, when the Nauroz ceremonies were going on in the palace, the elder brother Abdulla Khan was planned to be assassinated. The Sayyad Chief however got the scent beforehand and defeated the plot of his enemies, just as his younger brother succeeded in winning over the friendship of Raja Ajit Singh, and in defeating and killing Daud Khan in the Deccan.

These are only a few of the instances to show how Farrukh Siyar tried to get rid of the Sayyad Brothers, which compelled the latter to pay him in his own coin. When Hussain Ali marched away to the Deccan, life for Abdulla Khan in Delhi was made precarious. Hussain Ali was recalled to Delhi by his elder brother for help. Before, however, he returned from the Deccan, the younger Sayyad entered into an agreement with the Marahas agreeing to pay them the *Chauth* and *Sardeshmukhi* over the six provinces of the Deccan

in return for military help. With the help of the Marathas thereafter, and accompanied by the Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath, Hussain Ali marched to Delhi. Farrukh Siyar refused to ratify the treaty. He was dragged out of his harem, blinded and imprisoned, and later on during the night of 27 April, 1719 he was put to death. In his place, Rafi-us-Darajat, a son of Rafi-us-Shan was raised to the throne on 18 February 1719.

Rafi-us-Darajat

Removal of Farrukh Siyar and the enthronement of Rafi-us-Darajat helped the Sayyad Brothers to consolidate their power yet further. They were now the virtual kingmakers of Delhi. Rafi-us-Darajat was a young man of twenty years when he came to power, and was said to be quite intelligent. But he suffered from consumption, and his condition became serious shortly after his accession to the throne. Nikusiyar, a son of Akbar, or the grandson of Aurangzeb revolted during his time, and set up himself as Emperor at Agra with the help of Mitra Sen, a Nagar Brahmin whom he appointed his Wazir. This move was said to be countenanced by persons like Nizam-ul-Mulk, and was serious. Hussain Ali wanted to march to Agra and suppress the rebellion. But he was afraid lest the Emperor in Delhi should die in his absence and occasion yet another revolution to endanger the position of the Sayyad Brothers themselves. Rafi-us-Darajat was therefore persuaded to step down from power in favour of his elder brother Rafi-us-Daula who thus became the next Emperor on 6 June 1719, under the title of Shah Jahan II. Darajat died after about a week of this event.

Rafi-us-Daula

Hussain Ali now marched upon Agra. Nikusiyar was taken a prisoner and sent away to be shut up in the fort of Salimgarh where he died on 11 March 1723. Mitra Sen committed suicide before he could be captured. Law and order thus was once again secured. But before the Sayyad Brothers could give serious attention to the administrative problems, Rafi-us-Daula, who himself suffered from consumption and other body and mental disorders, died on 17 September 1719, after a short reign of only three months and twelve days.

Mohammad Shah (1719-48)

After the death of Rafi-us-Daula, the Sayyad Brothers had no difficulty in putting another puppet on the throne. This was Roshan Akhtar, the son of Jahan Shah who was only 17 years old when placed on the throne, under the title of Mohammad Shah, on 28 September 1719. The new Emperor was given more to witnessing animal fights than to other princely pursuits. He had neither experience nor ability to govern, with the result that the power continued in the hands of the Sayyad Brothers.

The Sayyads, however, were not destined to enjoy power for long. The foreign elements belonging to the Irani and Turani parties had suffered an eclipse of power for too long. Already efforts had been made to overthrow the Sayyad Brothers, as for instance when Nikusiyar was made Emperor at Agra, but they had failed. Now the intrigues of the enemies of the Sayyads became sharp, and Mohammad Shah who was dogged by their agents at every step, was persuaded by Nizam-ul-Mulk to assert his independence. The latter who was appointed the Governor of Malwa, attacked also the territories of Khandesh which belonged to Hussain Ali's viceroyalty. Expeditions sent against him failed, with the result that Hussain Ali himself marched against Nizam-ul-Mulk, taking the Emperor with himself lest he should create some mischief behind. Abdulla Khan remained in Delhi. As, however, Hussain Ali marched out of the capital, conspiracy was hatched by Mohammad Amin Khan, a Turani leader who was helped by Hyder Ali, the Superintendent of the Imperial artillery and others. Hussain Ali was murdered, the Emperor put himself personally at the head of the Imperial army, appointed Mohammad Amin Khan as his Wazir under the title of Itmad-ud-Daula, marched back to Delhi, and on 15 November 1720 he defeated and took Abdulla Khan a prisoner at Bilochpur near Agra. The elder Sayyad Brother died in 1722 while still in the jail, and thus ended the story of the Sayyad Brothers who for about eight years acted as super Emperors, replacing one Mughal prince by another on the Delhi throne, and wielding dictatorial powers in the central government as far as it was recognised.

The downfall of the Sayyads was natural. There were causes for this. Theirs was the usurped power however naturally it came, which could be liked neither by the Emperors nor by the old nobility which they replaced. The barbaric punishment they meted out to Farrukh Siyar and other enemies also earned them a bad name. Nor was their policy of liberalisation and toleration towards the non-Muslims tolerated by the orthodox elements among the Muslims. Never before in the history of the Mughals had an Imperial authority suffered the rise of such predominating influence which could make or mar an Emperor's fate. The rise of the Sayyads, therefore was looked on with a jealous eye from every quarter. The hostile forces belonging to the Turani and Irani parties had started working against the Sayyads right from the start. There were powerful nobles like Sadat Khan and Nizam-ul-Mulk at work against them. They steadily re-asserted their power, the galling yoke of the Sayyads over the Emperors was fully made use of in their hostile propaganda, and the Sayyads were ultimately overthrown.

Yet the achievements of the Sayyads were great. After a long rule of religious fanaticism and orthodoxy, it was they who gave an effective turn to the events in the Imperial history at Delhi asserting that no rule could be a success in this country unless the people's participation in it was secured. The general mass of the people in

India were Hindus, and their feelings and beliefs had duly to be accommodated to make the power at Delhi secure. *Jazia* was thus abolished, and other religious disqualifications of the Hindus removed. The Rajputs were placated, Raja Ajit Singh's daughter was married to Farrukh Siyar to re-enact Akbar's policy of inter-communal mixing up, persons like Raja Rattan Chand were given high posts, and the Marathas were also placated when Hussain Ali agreed to their rights to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the Deccan.

Personally also, the Sayyad Brothers were known for their kind disposition towards the poor and the destitute. Every day a large number of people benefited from their charity and hospitality. The works of public utility such as the construction of roads, bridges and rest houses were also undertaken. Corruption was sought to be removed and efficiency and literary qualities were duly rewarded.

But the rot that had set in during the Mughal rule, could not permit the Sayyads to continue for long. The circumstances had placed a power in the hands of the Sayyads which was unnatural. They were in a position in which they could not continue for long, but from which it was not easy to escape and extricate themselves either. They were a part of the stream which flowed downward, and ultimately into the sea of oblivion. Sailing upward could be feasible only for a short while, not for any considerable length of time.

To continue with Mohammad Shah after the downfall of the Sayyads, Itmad-ud-Daula, his new Wazir, died in 1721, and in his place his cousin Chin Qilch Khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk was appointed the Wazir. The Nizam-ul-Mulk was an ambitious man and an opportunist who was interested more in developing an independent kingdom in the Deccan than in setting the Imperial authority on a sound footing. The Emperor soon discovered that if he had freed himself from the painful tutelage of the Sayyads, he had fallen under a yoke which was yet more humiliating. He tried to dispose of Nizam-ul-Mulk by intrigues. He was appointed to take charge in the Deccan, but Mubariz Khan, the man in charge there was secretly instructed somehow to destroy the man. Nizam-ul-Mulk, however, proved stronger, he fought and killed Mubariz and sent his head to the Emperor to slight him.

The net result of factions and intrigues in the Imperial Court was that one province after another started declaring its independence from the central authority. Bengal, Oudh, the Deccan, Malwa, Gujarat, Bundelkhand; the Sikhs in the Punjab, the Rohillas in the Gangetic Doab, the Jats, the Rajputs and the Marathas, all asserted their independence. And in the midst of this appeared Nadir Shah in 1739, followed by Ahmad Shah Abdali who invaded India in 1748 and several times again thereafter. The Mughal power, whatever of it remained, was shattered; and the Emperor became a mere shadow

depending on the mercy of his protectors one of whom was replaced by another making a puppet of the Emperor. Mohammad Shah died on 15 April, 1748, and was succeeded by his only son Ahmad Shah. Before attempting a few words on the new Emperor, it would be interesting first to discuss Nadir Shah's invasion of India and its effects. The first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali which took place during his time, and his subsequent invasions will be discussed in the following pages.

THE INVASION OF NADIR SHAH

From January to May 1739, there was complete confusion at Delhi and Lahore. During this period Nadir Shah led an invasion into India. Born in 1688, in a castle fifty miles to the north of Mashad, the capital of Khorasan, Nadir Kuli belonged to a Turkoman tribe known as Afshars. From a petty free-booter, Nadir was destined to become the terror of the whole of Asia. After several years of a daring adventurous life, Nadir Kuli was saluted as the king of the Persians under the name of Nadir Shah in 1736. He soon conquered Kandahar, Balkh and Bokhara, and then marched into India.

Of the different factors which precipitated Nadir Shah's invasion of this country, one was the fact that Mohammad Shah, the Emperor of India, had suddenly withdrawn his ambassador from the Persian court and snapped all his diplomatic ties with that country after Nadir Shah's coming to power, which the latter did not like. Secondly, when Nadir invaded Afghanistan, some Afghan nobles took refuge in the Mughal territories, and despite his promises to withdraw the Mughal protection from these refugees, Mohammad Shah did not do anything to the effect. Thirdly, Nadir Shah sent his envoy to the Mughal court three times to straighten the affairs, but received no encouraging response. The third time, rather, he got a rebuff when his ambassador was detained at Delhi for over a year, yet no message was sent to him. The chaotic conditions that obtained in India when the Mughal power was waning and all around the ambitious nobles were trying to establish independent positions, was an open invitation to any strong neighbouring ruler to take advantage of the situation. The personal ambitions of Nadir Shah when he had consolidated his power at home, and when the riches of India offered a strong inducement to capture them, also should have been a cause. And lastly, the two disaffected nobles of Delhi, namely, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Sadat Khan sent him special messages to invade India with the promise that they would render him every help they could.

It was in these circumstances that Nadir Shah invaded India with an army of 1,25,000 horse, Kazil-bashis, Georgians, Turks, Khorasanis, Balkhis, etc. all inured to fatigue and hardships. He captured Jallalabad and Peshawar, and crossing the Jhelum and the

Chenab he proceeded towards Lahore. The Governor, Zakariya Khan with his 25,000 horse, was completely routed in a battle and made to implore the invader's clemency. On the payment of a tribute of twenty lakh rupees, Lahore was saved from the horrors of a massacre. Zakariya Khan was confirmed in his government of Lahore and Nadir Shah struck a gold coin on the obverse of which was the inscription 'Nadir, the Sultan', and on the reverse, 'Struck at capital of Lahore, 1151, May God preserve his reign !' Thereafter he proceeded towards Delhi. On the 14 February 1739 Nadir reached the plains of Karnal where Mohammad Shah, the Emperor of Delhi, had already reached two days earlier with his 1,50,000 horse, exclusive of irregular cavalry. The attack was led by the Indian army and the battle started, but the effeminate followers of the Mughal Emperor soon proved themselves quite unable to cope with the valour of the hardy Turkomans, and were defeated with a heavy slaughter of one hundred nobles and officers of distinction, and thirty thousand soldiers.

The Indian Emperor thereafter begged for clemency and agreed to pay an indemnity of twenty-five Karor¹ rupees, and also to Nadirs troops remaining in the capital to recover from the fatigue of the campaign until such time as the money should be paid. The two Emperors then marched to Delhi where the treasury was stripped of the most valuable articles and *Khutba* was read in the name of Nadir. Everything was going on peacefully when an unfortunate event occurred. A Persian soldier forcibly tried to seize some pigeons exposed for sale, a mob collected and in a fit of frenzy and rage rushed upon the Persians in different parts of the city, killing about three thousand of them. Nadir Shah himself was fired at in the mosque of Raushan-ud-Daula where he had repaired. The shot which came from a neighbouring terrace, missed him and killed one of his immediate attendants. The fierce spirit of the Shah was roused to fury, and unsheathing his sword he ordered general massacre of the inhabitants of the city. Guns were now ordered out. "The bloody scene extended from *Surafa Ardui*, in front of the fort, to *Idgah*, which is three Kos distant, and from *Chitli Kabar* as far as the tobacco market and Pul Mithai. The whole of the Dariba Bazar ran red with the blood...Neither sex nor age was spared. Before two o'clock in the afternoon, it is computed, between 1,20,000 and 1,50,000 were slaughtered." Nobles approached the Shah requested him to spare the city, saying : "Not a soul has been spared by the avenging sword. If it be thy wish to carry on the work of destruction any further, infuse life into the dead and renew the slaughter."² Nadir granted the request.

- The regalia of the Mughal Empire was seized, citizens put under contributions, charges were levied on the governors of

1. One Karor is equal to ten millions.

2. Latif, Mohammad, *History of the Punjab*, pp. 194-205.

provinces, and Nadir started from Delhi on his return journey with immense wealth which included gold, silver, jewels, and the famous Kohinur. He married his son Nasrullah to the daughter of Aziz-ud-Din, the grandson of Aurangzeb, and himself wanted to marry the beautiful daughter of another noble, but was prevented from doing so by one of his wives. At the time of his departure he sent a messenger to Zakariya Khan to pay another crore of rupees which the latter collecting from his nobles and merchants of the city, did. Before starting back, Nadir also collected a large number of "elephants, horses, camels and valuable furniture, and the most skilful workmen and artisans, numbering several hundreds."¹

The invasion of Nadir Shah had a far-reaching effect on the politics and history of this country. In the Punjab, taking advantage of the confusion that was thus caused, the Sikhs who were already having a steady development of power, spread all over the north-east of the Punjab and laid the whole of the Upper Bari Doab under contribution. And when Nadir's soldiers passed through the Punjab on their journey overloaded with booty and walking slowly under the terrible heat of May, the Sikhs fell upon them several times dispossessing them of a large amount of wealth and setting at liberty many of the Indian artisans and others being carried away as captives. The Sikh attacks started on the Chenab,² before Nadir crossed it, and continued on every second or third night from different directions till Nadir Shah left the Indian soil. Being deeply annoyed, the invader demanded of Zakariya : "Whence come those long-haired barbarians who dare to molest me ?" "They are a group of faqirs who visit their Guru's tank twice a year, and bathing in it they disappear", came the reply. "Where do they live ?" "They live on the saddles of their horses," was the reply. "Then be careful," Nadir warned, "for it will not be long before they occupy your country."³ The warning proved correct, and Nadir's invasion created a situation in India from which the Sikhs benefited.⁴

The Mughal power as a result of this invasion was further weakened. Mohammad Shah was not like Porus to stand erect before adversity and keep dignity when all else was lost. His submissive attitude and the open insults that he bore just in order to save his own skin, lowered him before the eyes of his countrymen and nobles. It encouraged rebellious elements yet further, and independent states began to spring up in the outlying provinces of the Mughal Empire, like the Deccan and Bengal.

1 *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

2. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, I, p. 113; Sinha, N.K., *Rise of the Sikh Power*, p. 12.

3. See Gordon, *The Sikhs*, pp. 57-58.

4. For further details see Chhabra *Study in the History of the Punjab*, Vol. I, Chapter XXII.

It took quite some time before Delhi recovered from the shock. And during this time the Marathas, the Rajputs, the Jats and other non-Muslim elements also got an opportunity to strengthen their power. Then the loss to Delhi, both in terms of wealth and lives, was great. The whole city lay sacked and desolated. Not only the Imperial palace was despoiled and subjected to defilement, every house in Delhi suffered from a similar fate in addition to the loss of life and honour that was trod under foot. It took some time before the houses were re-built and occupied, but the insult that the city suffered could not be forgotten for generations to come. The people now knew that their honour and life were no more safe in the keeping of the Mughal rulers.

Before Nadir left Delhi, the trans-Indus provinces of the Mughal Empire including Sind, the Western Punjab and Kabul were ceded to him. The Persians secured a lodgement at strategic places like the Khyber pass where they stood as a constant menace to India's peace and tranquillity.

THE SUCCESSORS OF MOHAMMAD SHAH

Mohammad Shah was succeeded by his only son Ahmed Shah in 1748. Ahmed Shah's *zenana* is said to have extended for about a mile, where he revelled day and night not caring to see a male figure for weeks together. His mother Kudsiya Begum conducted the administration on his behalf. But this state of affairs could not continue for long. On 5 June 1754 Ghazi-ud-Din became the Wazir, and collecting the nobles together he got it decided jointly that the Emperor be removed. In July 1754, Alamgir Sani, a son of Jahandar Shah, was placed on the throne, Ahmed Shah having been removed, blinded and imprisoned in Salimgarh near the palace.

When Alamgir II succeeded to the throne in 1754, the repeated invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali and the assertion of independence by the Muslim nobles and others in different parts of the country had shrunk the Mughal Empire within a small distance around Delhi itself. His authority was more or less like that of the Chhatrapati of the Marathas after the death of Shahu, though he was more of a literary character than a hunter after the pleasures of *zenana*. He was fifty-five years old when he came to power, but having spent a major part of his life only inside a prison house, he had no administrative experience and left everything to his Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk who was unscrupulous, greedy and corrupt, and who persecuted the Emperor's son Ali Gauhar, later Shah Alam, who had to flee the capital and take refuge in Bihar. Ahmed Shah Abdali led his fourth invasion of India in 1756, plundered Delhi and appointed Najib-ud-Daula as his plenipotentiary and Bakshi of the Mughal Emperor before he left for Afghanistan. Real authority of the government now passed into the hands of Najib which the Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk did not like. The Emperor Alamgir Sani also wanted

to get rid of the Wazir because of his insolent behaviour, with the result that the latter turned to the Marathas who established their influence in Delhi. The Wazir also got the Emperor himself treacherously assassinated at Kotla Ferozeshah in Delhi where his body was thrown out into the open after stripping it of all its clothes, on 20 November 1759, where after Ali Gauhar, the Emperor's son, then at Patna, succeeded to the throne.

Ali Gauhar who became the next Emperor in 1759, under the title of Shah Alam, did not return to Delhi till 1771 when the Marathas re-established their hold on that city and invited him to come to his capital. This was due to his fear of the Wazir which compelled him to remain a refugee with Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh till 1765 when under the Treaty of Allahabad he came under the British protection who gave him an annual tribute of twenty-six lakh rupees together with the territories of Kora and Allahabad for his maintenance, in return for the grant of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa that he made to them. We will have greater opportunities of discussing the career and activities of this unfortunate ruler in our subsequent pages. He died in 1806 when he was succeeded by his son Akbar II who also, till his death in 1837, remained only under the British protection. Akbar II who was a great poet but no good administrator, was succeeded by Bahadur Shah. The latter participated in the rising of 1857 against the British and was sent away as a prisoner to Rangoon where he died in 1862, and thus ended the nominal rule of the Mughals, no successor to his being recognised by the British.

DOWNFALL OF THE MUGHALS

Of the different factors or causes which brought about the downfall of the Mughals, Aurangzeb's personal character and activities accounted for a lot. He was not as liberal towards the people of India as his predecessors had been. The Mughals were Muslims, while India was basically Hindu. Akbar followed a policy of toleration towards Rajputs and other Hindus and during his time they played a significant role in the strengthening and expansion of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb, however, was an orthodox Muslim who imposed special charges on the Hindus, like *Jazia* and tried forcibly to convert them to the same faith. The execution of Guru Teg Bahadur, the Sikh Guru, at Delhi and other such barbaric persecutions of the Hindus at his hands alienated them against the Empire, and everywhere they started asserting their independence.

Secendly, the way Aurangzeb himself had come to power after imprisoning his own father, had made him suspicious of his own sons. The slightest move on their part prompted punishments which completely demoralised them and converted them into indolent, helpless men lacking all will-power, energy and initiative. Of his five

sons, one died in the prison another as an exile in Persia during his own time, none of the other three had escaped imprisonment and other punishments at the hands of their father. They had to suffer humiliation instead of enjoying the loving care of a father interested in the sound princely training of his children. When power went into the hands of these sons of Aurangzeb after his death, the consequences were natural.

Aurangzeb's Deccan policy also made a significant contribution to the downfall of the Mughal power. He remained twenty-five years in the Deccan and conquered the Shia states of Bijapur and Golconda. Such long absence from the north paralysed the administration in that part of the country and gave an opportunity to the Sikhs, the Jats and others to assert their independence. Destruction of the Shia Muslim states in the Deccan removed the only local check on the Marathas and they now became free to menace the Mughal power direct. And thirdly, the incessant warfare that Aurangzeb indulged in as the result of this policy, drained his finances, tired out his army and exhausted the patience of his supporters.

Then there were some general causes which also helped only to bring about the Mughal downfall. The Mughals were foreigners. Akbar identified himself with the feelings and beliefs of the common man of this country who was Hindu; Jehangir and Shah Jahan were indifferent; while Aurangzeb was actively opposed to him with the result that it gave a cause to the national character to assert itself against the foreigners, as the Hindustani Party of the Sayyad Brothers in the time of Farrukh Siyar did, and further weakened the Mughal empire.

Further the Mughal system of administration depended too much upon individuals. Everything revolved round the personality of the Emperor in Delhi, which if strong and assertive, made the Mughal administration vigorous and efficient. Aurangzeb's successors, however, who were given more to the pleasures of the *zenana* and the indolence of tired men who had neither will nor ability to administer, were bound only to bring about the downfall of the Mughal power.

The Mughal system of escheat under which all the property of a *mansabdar* lapsed to the state after his death, made the Mughal nobles thriftless, lazy and men spoiled by affluence. Gone were the days of the nobles like Bairam Khan. Now all were busy in wreckless speculations with regard to the changing personalities on the Mughal throne, and administration and welfare of the people deteriorated.

The Mughal army was a mixture of all races, the Persians, the Afghans, the Uzbeks and the Indians. They had no common cause for which to fight. Their salaries fell into arrears, and they transferred their allegiance from one chief to another according to their

convenience, and according to the pecuniary advantages offered. The soldiers who worked under the *mansabdars*, were loyal more to them than to an emperor, and under a *mansabdar* also they were more of opportunists than men attached to any moral values.

There was no law of primo-geniture observed among the Mughals to guide them to decide their questions of succession, with the result that when an emperor fell ill, his children instead of looking after him, started sharpening their swords to get succession, in case he died. There were few examples where wars of succession were not fought, and where a successor came to power without wading through a pool of blood. It created bad examples for others and taught everybody the principle only of might is right.

The Mughal Empire was unwieldy, and there was no end to rebellions once they began. Hardly was there a time even under the strongest of the Mughal rulers when there was peace in all parts of the country. In the time of the weak emperors there were disturbances all around which they could have handled if small in number. But when in the east, west, south and the north, everywhere independent powers began to develop, it was beyond their control to meet the situation.

The foreign invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali also helped in the further decline of the Mughal power. These invaders drained India and the Mughal palaces of their riches and wealth. They lowered the prestige of the Indian rulers who were completely powerless to defend their country and give peace to people. All respect for the administration was lost and the people knew that their safety lay only in their own strength and organisation, and not in supporting a power which had lost all justification for its existence.

The Bhakti movement which originated in the South and spread all over the country to bring about revivalism among the Hindus, also prepared a ground for fight against the Mughal tyranny and for the overthrow of their rule. The rise of the Marathas in Maharashtra and that of the Sikhs in the Punjab was an effect mainly of this movement which taught the people the principle of equality and independence, as against humble subservience and slavery.

And lastly, the appearance of the Europeans in the field also was a contributory factor for the Mughal downfall. The Mughals had developed no naval power without which the rising European influence could not be checked. The British victory at Plassey was a turning point in the history of India, and their victory at Buxar in 1764 in which the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Oudh both were humbled, cleared effectively the way for the establishment of the British Empire against which the Mughal power could only decline and disappear.

The Rise of Shahu 1708-1749

Before Shivaji the Great died in 1680, his eldest son Sambhaji, due to his misconduct, was being kept at Panhala under strict surveillance. Soyarabai, the mother of Rajaram, the second son of Shivaji, took advantage of the situation at the death of the great Maratha monarch and managed to put Rajaram on the throne. Sambhaji, getting wind regarding the death of his father and the consequent enthronement of Rajaram, dashed out to crush his enemies and succeeded in setting himself upon the throne on 28 July 1680 after putting Rajaram into confinement and after meteing out barbaric punishments to the others who supported the latter's cause. But he lacked the sagacity of a ruler, abandoned himself to a life of ease, drunkenness and debauchery whereby he succeeded not only in alienating his own subjects, but also in giving an opportunity to the Mughals who took him prisoner in December 1688, at Sangameshwar where he was found completely off his guard in a state of intoxication and sexual depravity. His refusal to convert to Muslim religion at the court of Aurangzeb earned him death punishment soon thereafter. This cleared the way for Rajaram once again who was taken out of his confinement and put on the throne as a regent for Shahu, the son of Sambhaji who was then only six years old. In 1690 Shahu and his mother Yesubai were also captured by the Mughals at Raigad, which left Rajaram free formally to keep his throne till he died in 1700. After his death his widow Tarabai assumed the reins of the government as Regent of her son Shivaji II.

Shahu and his mother found a friend in Aurangzeb's daughter Zebunnissa and all humane considerations at the hands of the Emperor himself who never interfered with their religion and gave every facility for the upbringing of the prince till his own death in 1707. The Emperor had desired to make political use of Shahu whom he got two beautiful brides and gave a life of tender love and care. At least on two different occasions he planned to release Shahu in order to bring about a discord in the Maratha ranks, but he did not put his design into effect. Soon after his death, however, when there was a war of succession between his sons, Prince Azam in

whose captivity Prince Shahu at this time was, released the latter on the advice of his general Zulfikar Khan so that the Marathas might be plunged into a civil war making them incapable of taking advantage of the weakness of Delhi. The expected happened, though in the meanwhile Prince Azam himself was killed in the battle of Jajau, and Bahadur Shah became the new Emperor of India.

Shahu was released in May 1707 on the condition that he would remain a feudatory to Azam Shah. He was granted *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the six subahs of the Deccan, together with his paternal kingdom and the territories of Gujarat, Gondwana and Tanjore. And as a guarantee for his good behaviour, his two wives, mother and a half brother were kept as hostages.

BALAJI VISHWANATH

Early Career. Balaji Vishwanath who came from a respectable Deshmukh family of Konkan, had worked under different chiefs in petty offices before he came to prominence and was appointed Peshwa or Prime Minister by Shahu. The story of the early career of Balaji merges into that of the establishment of the power of Shahu after his release from the Imperial court.

As Shahu marched through the country subsequent^{*} to his release, one chief after another joined to support his claim on the Maratha throne. Tarabai, the widow of Rajaram, who was at the helm of affairs in the Maratha state in the name of his son Shivaji II, was determined not to give place to Shahu, and prepared for war. Balaji Vishwanath was at this time in the service of Dhanaji Jadhav, the Senapati of Tarabai, and held the post of his revenue agent and a military officer. The Senapati Dhanaji sent Balaji personally to verify that Shahu, who was now approaching, was no imposter. The latter, after having met Shahu persuaded the Senapati to support his cause against Tarabai. Several other chiefs of the royal lady likewise deserted her, with the result that out of all the important nobles, Parashram Trimbak Pratinidhi alone remained to fight on her behalf at the battle of Khed which she fought against Shahu. The others kept aloof. Shahu was victorious, Pratinidhi fled the battle field, and Dhanaji now openly declared his support for the former. Several more chiefs joined Shahu, and the latter now marched to besiege Satara, the seat of the government of Tarabai. Satara also fell, and the lady moved south of the Krishna, leaving the north of it for Shahu to become its master.

Shahu, by nature, was gentle and prudent. He was not vindictive like his father and was willing to accommodate Tarabai by ceding the whole country to the south of the Warna to her, but she was short-sighted and implacable, and instead of responding favourably, started making preparations once again to assert her authority. She was besieged once again at Rangna, the fort should have fallen

but for the advice of Dhanaji to raise the siege. Dhanaji had his personal motives due to which he did not want Shahu to become too powerful and Tarabai completely to be crushed. But Balaji, once having joined the new Maratha king, remained steadfast in his loyalty towards him. He was appointed by Shahu, at the time of his coronation, as Multaig to Amburao Hunmate, his Amatya. Soon after, in 1708, when Dhanaji died, Balaji was appointed organiser of armies, under the title of Sanakarte, Chandrasen Jadhav being appointed the Senapati. Several of the Maratha chiefs still wavered in their loyalty between Shahu and Tarabai, while others were simply mischief makers and plundered about without any remorse. One such freebooter was Damaji Thorat who treacherously seized Balaji and Shahu had to pay ransom to get him released. Shahu ordered Chandrasen and Balaji jointly to march against Thorat. Chandrasen however, deserted them. Shahu supported Balaji and Chandrasen joined Tarabai. In place of Chandrasen, Shahu appointed his younger brother Santaji Jadhav as Senapati but the example of Chandrasen was followed by several other chiefs and Shahu was thus badly weakened. It is in these circumstances that Balaji, proving his organising genius and diplomacy and bravery brought Shahu, completely out of the wood and set him on a career of conquests and a big empire.

Balaji borrowed sufficient amounts of money from some big-money-lenders such as Mahadaji Krishna Naik at his own responsibility and made new recruitments to his army to expand it, and after equipping it well turned to the enemies of Shahu one by one. Many of the chiefs of Tarabai were either worsted or bought off and a conspiracy was organised against Tarabai herself, under which Rajasbai, another widow of Rajaram, claimed the throne for her own son Sambhaji. The conspiracy was a success, Tarabai and her son were taken prisoners in 1711 and Rajasbai placed her son on the throne at Kolhapur, and accepted a demarcation of influence with Shahu, as the latter had wished.

After the overthrow of Tarabai, now Shahu turned his attention towards another Maratha chief who had developed a formidable power, supported by Tarabai, but after her removal from power, had started following an expansionist policy on his own. It was the well known Maratha Admiral, Kanhoji Angre, who had under his possession the whole of Konkan. from Bombay to Sawant Wadi. Shahu sent his Peshwa Bahiropan Pingle against the Admiral in 1712, but the Peshwa was defeated and taken prisoner, and Kanhoji started marching rapidly towards the capital of Shahu. A strong man was needed to meet the situation, and the choice naturally fell on Balaji who was forthwith appointed Peshwa in 1713.

As Peshwa

As soon as Balaji became the new Peshwa, he requested Shahu

to make some ministerial changes. He took up the office of Senapati himself, in addition to that of the Peshwa. He collected an army, about 4,000 strong, and prepared to meet the rapidly approaching Admiral. But before entering into a head-on collision, he decided to resort to diplomacy. Kanhoji was approached on mutually advantageous terms, and peace was established, under which the Admiral accepted the supremacy of Shahu. After this, several other rebellious chiefs were vanquished, and now instead of being on the defensive, Balaji adopted an offensive attitude which soon carried his influence as far as Delhi.

Azam Shah from whom Shahu had secured his release, leaving behind his wives and mother as hostages, had been killed in the battle of Jajan, as referred to above ; but the hostages remained safe in Delhi. Muazzam who ruled at Delhi from 1707 to 1712 under the title of Bahadur Shah, was succeeded by Jahandar Shah, and the latter was followed in 1713 by Farrukh Siyar from whom Balaji was now anxious to get the hostages released. The opportunity soon offered itself, of which the Peshwa made a full use, and thus Shahu was able to re-unite with his dear ones.

In 1713 Nizam-ul-Mulk had been appointed Viceroy in the Deccan. But the court intrigues in Delhi led to his recall and in 1714 Sayyad Hussain Ali was appointed in his place. Sayyad Abdulla Khan, the elder brother of Hussain Ali remained the Prime Minister in Delhi, but his increasing influence was a sore in the eyes of Farrukh Siyar who started encouraging the Marathas to create trouble for Hussain Ali in the Deccan and attempted to seize Abdulla Khan in Delhi, in both of which, however, he failed. Nizam-ul-Mulk, however, helped the Emperor to make Abdulla's life extremely difficult, with the result that the latter invited his younger brother in the Deccan to come to his help. Hussain Ali could not march to Delhi, particularly when the Marathas were hostile to him. He, therefore, approached Balaji for peace terms and in July 1718 signed with him an agreement which he promised to get ratified by the Emperor as soon as he reached Delhi.

Under the agreement thus signed, (1) all the hostages still kept in Delhi were immediately to be released ; (2) the Emperor was to recognise Shahu's claim over all the territories which were in the possession of Shivaji at the time of his death ; (3) the grant of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* over the six provinces of the Deccan and their tributaries such as Mysore and Tanjore, made by Azam Shah, was to be confirmed ; (4) the Maratha claims on the newly acquired territories were also to be recognised ; and (5) in return for all this the Marathas were to help in the maintenance of law and order in the Deccan, and keep an army of 15,000 always ready to assist the Emperor when required.

After the agreement was signed, Hussain Ali marched with his contingent to Delhi. He was accompanied by 16,000 Maratha soldiers under the command of Khanderao Dabhade, and Balaji with Santaji Bhonsle also marched with them. Hussain Ali had to pay at the rate of fifty thousand rupees a day so long as the Maratha soldiers remained with him. Reaching Delhi, the Viceroy asked the Emperor Farrukh Siyar to ratify the treaty. The latter having declined to do so, was removed from the throne, blinded and strangled to death. The Sayyads placed Rafi-us-Darajat on the throne on 18 February 1719, and the latter ratified the treaty for which Balaji had come to Delhi. The whole episode cost the Marathas about two thousand of their men killed or wounded. Balaji now marched back home. It was a great achievement that he had made, but he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of it himself. He died on 12 April 1720.

Balaji's services to Shahu were creditable. A great soldier, administrator and a statesman, but for his genius, Tarabai would not have been removed from the field as she was, nor would the Maratha king have escaped the wrath of the Admiral Kanhoji Angre. He not only reorganised Shahu's finances, introduced efficiency in his administration and crushed the rebellious chiefs, but also inspired him to enter into a career of expansion towards the north, the first major step towards which was taken when the Marathas appeared before Delhi, saw the rot in the Mughal power and matured plans to benefit therefrom in the time of the next Peshwa, Baji Rao I, the son of Balaji himself. The release of the hostages earned Balaji the gratefulness of Shahu, who repaid him after his death, by appointing his son as the next Peshwa. The steadfastness exhibited by Balaji in his faithfulness towards the gentle Shahu in fact won him his confidence so much so that the latter retired to a peaceful life at Satara leaving the whole responsibility of the defence and administration of his dominions to the Peshwa at Poona. This led soon to the weakening of the powers of the king who remained Chhatrapati only in name, while the powers were enjoyed by the Peshwa, and Poona became the real capital of the Marathas.

Sir Richard Temple writes : Balaji was a man of "calm, comprehensive and commanding intellect, an imaginative and aspiring disposition, an aptitude for ruling rude nature by moral force, a genius for diplomatic combination, a mastery of finance. His political destiny propelled him into affairs wherein his misery must have been acute . . . He wrung by a power of menace and argument from the Mughals a recognition of Maratha sovereignty. He carried victoriously all his diplomatic points. He sank into premature death with the consciousness that a Hindu Empire had been created over the ruins of Muhammadan power and that of this Empire the hereditary chiefship had been secured for his family."¹

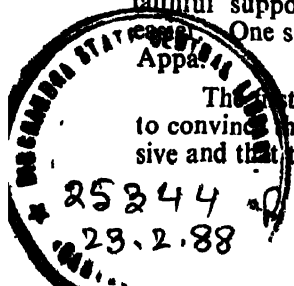
1. Temple, Sir Richard, *Oriental Experience*, pp. 389-90.

BAJI RAO I

Born on 18 August, 1700, Visaji, popularly known as Baji Rao, was one of the two male children that Radhabai, a wife of Balaji presented to her husband. The other was Chimnaji Appa, younger to Baji Rao, who distinguished himself as a great and seasoned general of the Maratha armies, and who remained always faithfully attached to his elder brother till he died. Balaji had kept both his sons under a strict discipline so long as he lived, and his adventurous life had left a deep impression on their character and thinking. Baji Rao often accompanied his father on his campaigns, was a witness to his victory over the enemies of Shahu, and was with him when Balaji was imprisoned by Damaji Thorat and later on released when Shahu paid the ransom money. He was only twenty years old when his father died, and Shahu appointed him Peshwa as a reward for the great services that Balaji had rendered him.

When Baji Rao became the new Peshwa, Shahu, the Chhatrapati, had almost completely renounced all his powers and retired into a peaceful life at Satara. Although the government was run in his name, the real power now was the Peshwa whose office was rendered hereditary, and towards whom everybody looked for final orders. The responsibility that the young man of twenty had to handle, therefore, was great. The greatest problem that Baji Rao faced at the time of his accession was the fact, that although legal sanction had been secured from the Mughal Emperor for the Maratha king's title over the territories Shivaji possessed at the time of his death, many of them still were outside his control, and some were in the possession of powerful chiefs like the Sidi of Janjira whom it was not easy to dislodge. Secondly, the Maratha right to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* over the six provinces of the Deccan had been admitted in Delhi, but Nizam-ul-Mulk who had set his heart on an independent kingdom of the Deccan to be carved out, was bound most virulently to contest. Thirdly, the Maratha claims over Gujarat and Malwa had yet to be asserted; the acquired territories had not as yet been fully consolidated; there were yet some refractory nobles who had to be brought under discipline; and lastly, Baji Rao was appointed Peshwa so young, that it aroused the jealousy of the more experienced officials like Naro Ram Mantri, Anand Ram Somant, and Shripat Rao Pratinidhi. Of all these, the last named noble gave considerable opposition to the Peshwa who had always to argue his views through before Shahu which often delayed the execution of his policy. Baji Rao, however, had some lieutenants on whose faithful support he always could depend, and that made his work easier. One such lieutenant was his own younger brother, Chimnaji Appa.

The first thing that Baji Rao did after his coming to power, was to convince the Maratha king that the best defence lay in being offensive and that the Mughal power was on its way to complete extinction



and the Marathas must take full advantage by attempting a territorial expansion in the north. "Strike, strike at the trunk and the branches will fall of themselves. Listen but to my counsel and I shall plant the Maratha banner on the walls of Attock," Baji Rao asserted before Shahu.

Nizam-ul-Mulk

Before marching to the north, however, it was necessary to consolidate the Maratha influence in the Deccan which was now under Nizam-ul-Mulk who was not willing to recognise the Maratha claims to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in his territories, granted to them in 1719. The Nizam was a great general, as also a diplomat who knew how to make use of favourable opportunities which he was bound to get if Baji Rao planned his onward move to the north. His real name was Mir Qamar-ud-Din and it was Farrukh Siyar who conferred the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk on him, and made him viceroy of the Deccan which consisted of the six provinces of Khandesh, Bijapur, Bidar, Berar, Hyderabad and Aurangabad which were very resourceful territories of the Mughal Empire. Appointed Viceoy in 1713, he had been recalled to Delhi when Hussain Ali was appointed to take his place. Farrukh Siyar, himself, as we have already seen, was removed from his throne by the Sayyad Brothers who declared Rafi-us-Darajat as the next Emperor in 1719. The latter died within a few months of his enthronement and was succeeded by Rafi-ud-Daulah who himself gave place shortly after to Mohammad Shah. It was in the time of the latter that Nizam-ul-Mulk got an opportunity to establish his authority in the Deccan which he wanted to convert into an independent kingdom. Elimination of the Sayyad Brothers from the political scene at Delhi soon after, left him free to mature his plans, and when Baji Rao met him at Chikhalthan on 4 January 1721, he was fully convinced that nothing short of a war could make him recognise the Maratha claims of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* on the territories which he considered his own.

Mohammad Shah recalled the Nizam to Delhi once again in 1721 to help him reform his administration, but the latter had his heart only in the Deccan. Differences also developed between the two, and he found it best for the Nizam to go back to the south. The Emperor, playing mischief, had asked Mubariz Khan, the Commandant of the Hyderabad Fort somehow to destroy the Nizam whom he reappointed as the Viceroy. But in a battle fought at Shakar Khera about eighty miles from Aurangabad, on 2 October, 1720, the Nizam defeated the Commandant and sent his head to the Emperor. This victory made the Nizam's claim on the Deccan hereditary, and his clash with the Marathas now became imminent.

In 1725 and 1726 when Baji Rao led his expeditions into the Carnatic, the Nizam was incensed, and started preparing to meet the

Maratha challenge. He won over to his side several of the Maratha nobles like Chandrasen Jadhav, Udaji Chavan and Rao Rambha Nimbalkar, tried to create dissensions between the two parties of Sambhaji and Shahu and transferred his capital from Aurangabad to Hyderabad which was a distant place and where he could pursue his anti-Maratha designs unknown to them. When Baji Rao demanded *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi*, he asked him to decide first whether Shahu or Sambhaji was the real king of the Marathas. Sambhaji joined the Nizam which compelled Baji Rao to march on 27 August 1727 and plunder several of the Nizam's territories such as Jalna, Burhanpur and Khandesh. Finding an opportunity, the Nizam suddenly stormed Poona where he proclaimed Sambhaji as Chhatrapati, but soon was compelled to march out of the city leaving behind Fazal Beg to defend it. He had to meet the Peshwa who started plundering his territories along the Godavari. The two armies met near Palkhed, about 20 miles from Daultabad whereafter the Nizam was compelled to sue for peace.

On 6 March 1728 the Treaty of Mungi Sheugaon was signed under which the Nizam agreed (1) to accept Shahu's sovereignty and never again to support the cause of Sambhaji; (2) and to recognise the Maratha claims to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the Deccan and clear all arrears due on account of these.

The Palkhed victory is a turning point in the career of Baji Rao. Besides being a great achievement for the young Peshwa, it was "undoubtedly a great blow to the prestige of the Nizam . . . Palkhed inaugurated the series of triumphs which the Peshwa by his leadership came to achieve in the years to come. It was also a lesson to the disgruntled renegades of Shahu's Court that it was no mean task to challenge the Peshwa's authority."¹

Gujarat

After his victory over the Nizam, the Peshwa turned his attention towards Gujarat which was well known for its two ports of Broach and Surat that were important trading centres. Shivaji had sacked Surat in 1664 and 1670 which was followed by regular incursions into the Gujarat territories by the other Maratha chiefs, especially the Dabhades, a family founded by Yesaji whose grandson Trimbak Rao was now the Senapati of Shahu. The Peshwa sent his brother Chimnaji Appa in 1730 to march into Gujarat and force its Mughal Governor, Sarbuland Khan on 23 March to cede to Shahu the right to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in that province. Sarbuland was soon replaced as Governor by Abhay Singh who recognised the commitment made by his predecessor. This incensed Trimbak Rao Senapati who considered Gujarat a special sphere of influence of his family, and he started conspiring with the Nizam to overthrow

1. Srinivasan, C K, *Baji Rao the First, the Great Peshwa*, 1961, p. 40.

the power of Baji Rao. Sambhaji also joined their ranks soon, and thus once again a formidable alliance was created to destroy the Peshwa. Baji Rao, however, met the situation with courage. Sambhaji was routed on the banks of Warna whereafter the Treaty of Warna was signed on 13 April 1731, under which the river Warna was laid down as the boundary line between the kingdoms of Shahu and Sambhaji. Earlier, on 1 April Trimbak Rao was also defeated and killed in the battle of Dabhoi, and the Nizam was also made to eat humble pie once again when he met the Peshwa at Rohe-Rameshwar, eight miles north of Latur, on 27 December, 1732, and promised never again to interfere with the Maratha exploits in the north.

The Peshwa's influence was fully established in Gujarat. But Shahu showed magnanimity towards the family of Trimbak Rao whose minor son Yashwant Rao was now made Senapati, and an agreement was signed whereby the right to collect *chauth* from Gujarat was also granted to him on the condition that one half of the collections made would be deposited into the royal treasury.

The Conquest of Malwa

The Peshwa had now to turn his attention towards Malwa on which Shahu's claims to levy *chauth* had not been recognised in 1719 when similar claims with regard to the Deccan were accepted by the Mughal Emperor. Early in 1723 the Peshwa had marched into the southern parts of Malwa, followed by regular incursions into those territories by his Generals, Ranoji Sindhia, Malhar Rao Holkar and Udaji Pawar who collected *chauth* and steadily developed their authorities resulting later on in the founding of their respective states of Gwalior, Indore and Dhar. In the early stages, however, the Marathas had to face much difficulty in these regions.

In June 1725 the Emperor appointed Giridhar Bahadur as the governor of Malwa, and charged him with the duty to clear the Maratha hordes from those territories. Giridhar was to be assisted by the commander Daya Bahadur. From 1725 to 1727 the Peshwa had been busy in the Carnatic. In 1728 when the Nizam was also humbled at Palkhed, he found time to give attention to Malwa. Sawai Jai Singh of Amber also encouraged him from the imperial capital, Delhi, towards this direction, and in October 1728 the Peshwa collected a huge force under the command of Chimnaji, assisted by the Generals, Sindhia, Holkar and Pawar. Chimnaji gave a battle to the imperial army at Ajmera on 29 November 1728 and once again demonstrated his qualities as an intrepid organiser of wars when both Giridhar Bahadur and Daya Bahadur were slain and the Mughal army was given a crushing defeat. He carried his arms onwards to reduce Ujjain, but withdrew for lack of the proper means of supply. The Maratha power in Malwa, however, was established,

though a few places like Ujjain had yet to be humbled.

The Mughal Emperor was not, however, ready to renounce Malwa into the hands of the Marathas. He chose Jai Singh to re-establish his authority. This Rajput chief, however, counselled a compromise with the Marathas to which the Emperor did not agree and appointed Muhammad Khan Bangash in 1730 instead. The latter met Nizam-ul-Mulk and matured a concerted plan to humble the Peshwa, to which later on the alliance of Trimbak Rao Dabhade and Sambhaji was also secured. The defeat and death of Trimbak Rao at Dabhoi on 1 April 1731, however, led these Muslim chiefs to separate and retreat. Muhammad Khan was recalled to Delhi and Jai Singh re-appointed as the Governor of Malwa. The latter was, however, humbled by Holkar in a battle. Two more expeditions followed against the Marathas from Delhi, but they had to sue for peace by offering twenty-two lakh rupees as *chauth* for Malwa. The contest continued for some time more till on 4 March 1736 Baji Rao met Jai Singh near Kishangad whereafter the latter persuaded the Emperor to accept the Maratha demands. Baji Rao was appointed as the Deputy Governor of Malwa which in effect amounted to its cession to the Marathas, though the Emperor still did not think in those terms till the Peshwa himself marched to Delhi and made him realise the veracity of the fact. Thus did Malwa also fall before Baji Rao.

March into Bundelkhand

It was Chhatrasal belonging to the Bundela clan of Rajputs who raised a standard of revolt against Aurangzeb in the eastern Bundelkhand and established an independent kingdom of his own when the Emperor was busy in the Deccan. The Mughals sent several expeditions against the Bundela chief, but they all failed to dislodge him, and he went on expanding his dominions till early in 1727 Muhammad Khan Bangash, the Mughal Governor of Allahabad marched against him and in December 1728 took him and his family prisoners. During all this time Chhatrasal sent frantic appeals to the Peshwa for succour, but the latter being busy elsewhere could not send him any help, till in March 1729 he collected an army and marched towards Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal contrived to escape his captivity and joined him. They marched to Jaitpur and Muhammad Khan was obliged to leave the place promising never again to come.

Grateful Chhatrasal was thus restored to his position, and he repaid the Peshwa by assigning him a large personal *jagir* in Bundelkhand and giving him Mastani, his beautiful daughter from a Muslim mistress, in marriage. Before his death on 14 December 1731, the Bundela chief assigned some more territories in Bundelkhand to the Peshwa and in this way the Maratha influence expanded towards that side of the country as well.

The Siddis of Janjira

Siddis who came from the east coast of Africa, developed their hold over the sea-board between Bankot and Nagothana soon after 1490 when the Ahmadnagar ruler Nizam Shah occupied Janjira, an impregnable sea-girt fortress, and appointed one of their members as its governor. Encouraged by the Mughals, these Siddis started plundering the Maratha mainland in the time of Sambhaji, and they created a serious problem till Kanhoji Angre appointed by Rajaram as admiral of the Maratha fleet in 1628, appeared on the scene.

During 1700 and 1701 Kanhoji attacked the Siddi territories several times and compelled them to agree to pay him two-thirds of the revenues of the territories of Khanderi, Kolaba and Sangargarh. Between 1707 and 1711 he also captured some English and Dutch ships.¹ He was inclined to support Tarabai in her contest with Shahu, but was won over to the latter's side by Balaji in 1714, whereafter this combined power of the Marathas humbled the British in 1718, and again in 1721 when the latter were also supported by the Portuguese. In 1724 the Maratha admiral exhibited his naval supremacy over the Dutch as well.

In the meanwhile the Siddis recovered their power and occupied several of the Maratha territories including Raigarh, which had been Shivaji's capital and hence a symbol of the Maratha war of independence. This town was bestowed on the Siddis by Aurangzeb, and it aroused the indignation of the Marathas which was further added to when Sidi Sat, the Governor of Anjanwel and Gowalkot insulted a holy man named Brahmendra Swami whom the Marathas respected.

After the Nizam was defeated by Baji Rao in 1728, the latter began to think of proceeding against the Siddis. Kanhoji who died in 1729, was succeeded by his son Sekhoji Angre who was an equally able admiral, and who offered his full support to the Peshwa. In 1733 Sidi Rasul Yakut Khan died and there was a war of succession among his sons, the eldest of whom, Abdulla, was killed, and his son Abdul Rehman appealed to the Marathas for help. Now was the time for the Peshwa to strike. Janjira was besieged, but the Peshwa had not yet made any perceivable effect when on 8 June, 1733 the Pratinidhi occupied Raigarh, which instead of encouraging the Marathas towards a concerted action against the enemy, developed mutual jealousies and weakened their cause. The Peshwa received yet another blow when in August, 1733 Sekhoji Angre died, and he now decided to sign peace with the enemy.

Under the agreement thus signed, the Siddis accepted Abdul Rehman as the ruler of Janjira, their possessions were confined to

1. See for details Malgonkar, Manohar, *Kanhoji Angre, Maratha Admiral*, 1959, pp. 224-54.

that place, Anjanwel Gowalkot and Underi, while the territories of Raigarh, Rewas, Thal and Chaul which had already been wrested by the Marathas, remained with them.

As soon as Baji Rao returned to Satara the Siddis marched out to capture their lost territories. They threatened to take Raigarh once again in June 1734 when the Peshwa despatched a strong force which compelled the Siddis to withdraw. On 19 April 1736, Chimnaji suddenly attacked the Siddis encamped near Rewas and destroyed about 1,500 of them, killing their important leader Sidi Sat. Peace concluded on 25 September 1736 once again confined the Siddis to Janjira, Gowalkot and Anjanwel.

As a result of all these campaigns of Baji Rao, for "all practical purposes the Siddi was pushed back into the sea and his activity was confined largely to the island fortress of Janjira."¹ The Siddi power should have been completely destroyed if hostilities had not sprung up between the Pratinidhi and Peshwa, and if the Maratha naval power had not been weakened as a result of the contest for power among the sons of Sekhoji Angre after his death.

March to Delhi

The crowning feature of Baji Rao's activities was his march to Delhi in 1736 by when he had vanquished most of his enemies and was in a position to aspire for higher gains. He is said to have been secretly informed by Jai Singh that the time was opportune and after making due preparations he marched from Poona on 12 November 1736.

The Emperor had learnt of Baji Rao's designs, and he asked Saadat Khan who was encamped at Agra, to meet the menace. The Maratha Generals like Malhar Rao and Pilaji Jadhav crossed the Jamuna and plundered the territories of the Doab. Suddenly a huge Mughal army of 1,50,000 appeared and fell on them, taking a thousand of them prisoners and destroying a large number of them in the battle field. Saadat Khan thereafter retired to Mathura thinking that he had defeated the main Maratha army, of which he sent an exuberant account to the Emperor. The Peshwa himself, however, deluded him, and taking a different route suddenly appeared before Delhi to the utter consternation of the Emperor. He did not pillage the city and encamped himself at the Talkatora grove. About eight thousand soldiers under the command of Mir Hasan Khan Koka marched out to meet the Marathas near Rakabganj, but they had to retreat leaving behind about four hundred killed or wounded. If the Peshwa had marched ahead, he should have taken the city, but having received an intelligence that the Mughal army from Mathura was

1. Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

approaching Delhi, he thought it proper to leave the place immediately and move towards the south.

The Peshwa's march on Delhi was the greatest achievement that he made. It familiarised the Marathas with the imperial surroundings, and opened the way for the establishment of their sway on the north which was later on done by Sindhia who took the Emperor under his own protection.

The Emperor Mohammad Shah was naturally incensed. He invited the Nizam from the Deccan once again to come to Delhi and help set things right. Nizam-ul-Mulk who was always prepared to avail himself of an opportunity to humble the Peshwa, made necessary arrangements for the protection of his dominions and left for Delhi. The Peshwa returning from the imperial capital, was told by the Nizam at Sironj that he was going to Delhi only to make up for his past unhappy relations with the Emperor. Baji Rao suspected his designs, but was in a hurry to reach home and did not block his path.

Reaching Delhi, the Nizam was joined by several other Mughal chiefs, and at the head of seventy thousand soldiers and supported by enormous military supply he marched out to meet the Marathas. The Peshwa accepted the challenge happily, collected eighty thousand Maratha soldiers and leaving Chimnaji with about ten thousand behind to prevent any succour coming to the Nizam from the Deccan, he advanced towards the north. The Nizam reached Bhopal and did not think it advisable to move further south where the Maratha influence predominated. The Peshwa imposed a strict blockade on the city instead of leading an attack. Soon the huge army of the Nizam fell short of supplies, his frantic appeals to Delhi for help went in vain, for there were men in the imperial capital who were determined to bring about his ruin. Nor did Chimnaji permit any help to come from the Deccan. The Nizam was forced once again to sue for peace.

At Doraha Sarai an agreement was signed on 7 January, 1738 under which the Marathas were promised the formal cession of Malwa by the Emperor, recognition of the Maratha hold on all territories between the Chambal and the Narmada, and payment of fifty lakh rupees as an indemnity. The Nizam took an oath on the Koran now strictly to abide by the terms of the agreement.

The Victory of Bhopal was yet another feather in the cap of Baji Rao. Maratha supremacy in Malwa and the territories between the Chambal and the Narmada was now legally recognised, and the Nizam was fully convinced that his salvation lay only in acknowledging the Maratha superiority over him for life.

Against the Portuguese

The Portuguese had established their hold on territories between Chaul and Daman which was an eyesore to the Peshwa, particularly because they were not known for a policy of religious toleration towards the Hindus, and because they had violated an agreement with the Peshwa to give the Marathas a site in the Salsette island for building a factory.

Chimnaji was assigned the duty to march against them. The attack was led in March, 1737 when the Tana fort was occupied, followed by the fall of almost the whole of the Bassein island before the Marathas. Salsette was thereafter besieged but was valiantly defended by the Portuguese, with the result that its surrender could not be secured before 16 May 1739.

The fall of these territories besides adding to the prestige of Baji Rao, tremendously enhanced the reputation of Chimnaji who was acclaimed on all sides for his having retrieved them from a foreign yoke. Just this time Nadir Shah's invasion of Delhi turned the Maratha attention thither, and it was probably due to this reason that they did not press their victories on to Goa, the loss of which should have brought the Portuguese rule in India to an end.

The last years of Peshwa Baji Rao's life were not happy. He had married Mastani, as already alluded to, the daughter of Raja Chhatrasal by a Muslim mistress. Accounts, however with regard to her origin vary. Some consider her the daughter of the Nizam, while others refer to her as a courtesan of the court of some Muslim chief. Be that as it may, her beauty and charm captivated the Peshwa and he was so much infatuated with her that he developed drinking habits and always wanted to keep her by his side, whether in the war front or at home. In 1734 she presented him with a son whom he named Shamsher Bahadur. But the Peshwa's first wife Kashibai, his mother Radhabai, brother Chimnaji and sons by the first wife did not take all this kindly, partly because of jealousy and partly on grounds of orthodoxy. The priests refused to invest Shamsher with a sacred thread, and the Peshwa's relatives succeeded in their contrivance to separate him from Mastani. When his frantic efforts to get back Mastani failed, it began seriously to tell on his health. He tried to drown his grief in the activities of war, and his demand for some more territories from the Nizam to secure a route to the north having failed, he besieged Nasir Jang, the son of the Nizam in the fort of Aurangabad and compelled him to cede the districts of Nemad and Khargon which the Peshwa had in mind. The game over, Baji Rao began once again to feel sharply the sting of Mastani's absence, caught a virulent fever and died on 18 April 1740 in the presence of his first

wife at Raver on the Narmada. It is said that Mastani died soon thereafter with grief, while some say she committed *sati* on her husband's funeral pyre. The Peshwa had assigned his Bundelkhand jagirs to Shamsheer Bahadur who died fighting at Panipat in 1761. His son Ali Bahadur had his descendants in the Nawabs of Banda, the State founded on the Peshwa's Bundelkhand territories

Baji Rao, by all accounts, was one of the greatest organisers and Generals of his time. Shahu had been ignorant of all experiences, of war and administration because of the peculiar circumstances in which he was brought up in the Mughal court. Balaji gave him the moorings while it was Baji Rao who established his sovereignty and carried his arms far and wide. Even the great soldiers like Nizam-ul-Mulk considered Baji with awe, if not respect. The circumstances under which he came to power, were peculiar. Shahu at the time was surrounded not only by the hostile Muslim powers, but his oscillating was threatened by other contestants for the throne, while the nobles he had to depend upon, almost all were opportunists transferring their loyalties from one side to another. It was the genius of Baji Rao who not only humbled the surrounding Muslim powers, eliminated the contestants for the throne once for all and disciplined the disloyal chiefs, but also carried the Maratha arms to Delhi and exhibited his fighting superiority over the European powers like the Portuguese. Baji Rao's aim was to establish Hindu Pad Padshahi, and he made full use of the religious sentiments of the people for his policy of expansion and conquests.

R.V. Nandkarni writes : "The twenty years of his rule were a period of ceaseless activity, of wars and conquests during which he compelled the wily Nizam to resign the whole country between the Chambal and the Narmada, wore down all opposition to his absolute sway in the Konkan. At home his rivals had been silenced and they had been forced to submit to the inevitable ascendancy of the Peshwa. His great abilities as a first class General and soldier had borne fruit after a strenuous struggle for nearly fifteen years. The Maratha authority in Gujarat, Malwa, and Bundelkhand had been recognised; the conquests had indeed been made but the work of consolidation was yet to begin."¹

1. Nandkarni, R.V., *The Rise and Fall of the Maratha Empire*, Bombay, 1966, p. 196.

3

Balaji Baji Rao

Balaji Baji Rao, alias Nana Sahib, was the eldest son of Peshwa Baji Rao I, and had been brought up under the affectionate care of his uncle Chimnaji Appa. He was only eighteen when in opposition to the designs of Raghuji Bhonsle and some other Maratha chiefs he was nominated to Peshwaship by Shahu, in June 1740. It was in his time that the office of the Peshwa was made legally hereditary.

The story goes that though the enemies of the new Peshwa could not prevent his succession, later on during the illness of Shahu some of them including Raghuji Bhonsle, Pratinidhi and Rani Sakwarbai succeeded in poisoning the King's ears and got him summarily dismissed. The Peshwa promptly returned the insignia of his office and submissively requested for further orders. This impressed the King, and later on when he could not find anybody else suitable for the post, he re-appointed him handing him a document which proved to be of great constitutional significance. It was in this document that the Peshwa's office as head of the civil and military government was made hereditary. He was made responsible for the protection of Shahu's dynastic rights to kingship, to the exclusion of the Kolhapur house, and was given full regulatory powers over jagirdars, with powers to grant new jagirs as well. In this way the Peshwa's developing hereditary authority was given a legal sanction.

There was yet another episode of his time which gave a death blow to the authority of the Chhatrapati, and made the Peshwa supreme in all the Maratha affairs. Shahu was issueless and therefore he wanted to adopt a son. Out of his magnanimity he decided in favour of Ram Raja, the grandson of his enemy Tarabai, and left a will to this effect. Ram Raja was inspired by the Peshwa's enemies to assert his authority, which alerted the Peshwa and he deliberately adopted the policy of eliminating his opponents and collecting all powers in his own hands. Later on in 1750 when the Peshwa marched out to invade the territories of the Nizam, Tarabai and Umabai, taking the help of Bamaji Gaikwad, threw Ram Raja into a prison and tried to supersede the authority of Balaji Baji Rao himself.

The Peshwa getting information hurried back, defeated Gaikwad and imposed his own terms on him, under which he ceded half his territory, paid twenty lakh rupees as indemnity and promised never again to interfere in the Poona affairs. Tarabai finding her task hopeless, herself entered into a compromise with the Peshwa and agreed never again to aspire for any political power. She was permitted to retain hold over Ram Raja and manage his establishment at Satara. She also admitted that Ram Raja was an imposter and not really her grandson.

For sixty-eight years thereafter, Ram Raja, the Chhatrapati, and his descendants remained prisoners at Satara till in 1818 Lord Hastings abolished Peshwaship and placed the Chhatrapati on a throne provided him by the British. During this period all powers passed into the hands of the Peshwa and Poona became the hub of Maratha activities.

A few words with regard to Shahu (died 1749). Brought up in the Mughal *zenana*, Shahu had spent his early days in ease and luxury. When he was given his freedom, he had neither the intelligence nor the inclination for a strong government. He was lucky that he had efficient and loyal Peshwas one after another, who carried his arms far and wide and developed his prestige. There is no doubt that he was respected and often asserted his authority, as for instance, in settling the differences between Raghuji Bhonsle and the Peshwa, and between the Peshwa and Dabhade, and also when he dismissed Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao. Shahu was basically an easy-going man who loved the life of retirement.

Coming back to Balaji Baji Rao, he was not a military genius like his father and grandfather before him had been. It was during his time that the Maratha confederacy, the foundations of which had already been laid, became predominant. The individual Maratha chiefs became more ambitious and they carried their arms right up to Attock on the Indus, plundering everything that came their way, and thus alienating not only Muslims, but also Hindus, with the result that the old principles of the *Hindu Pad Padshahi* were cast to the winds. This Peshwa earned a name more as financier than as a General, his immediate achievement after coming to power being the measure to liquidate the debt of about fourteen and a half lakh rupees which his father had contracted and which worried him during his last days. During his time some revenue and judicial reforms were also made, but for those credit goes to Sadas Shiv Rao Bhau who established control on the revenue collectors and gave protection to the people against violence and harassment to which they were subjected. For the reform of the judicial structure on the other hand, it was Balshastrī Gadgil who was responsible.

Balaji Baji Rao "was by nature an inactive man and as he could rely on capable agents he became somewhat indolent by habit. He

never went personally to northern India and to the last he had no proper appreciation of the Delhi politics. He neglected the north and paid more attention to the south with the result that he never understood the extent of the Afghan menace."¹

Malwa

Of the more important developments of his time, one was the gain that he made in Malwa over which the Maratha claims had been accepted in the time of Baji Rao I, but which had not yet been formally handed over to them. Through Jai Singh, the Raja of Jaipur, the Peshwa approached the Emperor and got himself appointed the Deputy Governor of Malwa; Prince Ahmed Shah being the nominal governor. In return the Peshwa promised to remain faithful to the Emperor, keep five hundred Maratha soldiers always at the Mughal court and help the Emperor with another four thousand whenever it was needed.

Raghuji Bhonsle in Orissa

When Aurangzeb died in 1707, the provinces of Bengal and Orissa were under Murshid Quli Khan after whose death in 1727 Shuja-ud-Daula became the new Governor. The latter conquered Bihar as well, in 1733, and was succeeded in the three provinces by Sarfraz Khan who was overthrown in 1739 by Alivardi Khan, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, who now became the next Governor of the three provinces. Mir Habib, an Orissa noble, revolted against Alivardi Khan and requested Raghuji Bhonsle of Nagpur for his help. The latter sent a force under Bhaskar Rao which was defeated by Alivardi Khan. Raghuji himself appeared in 1743, but just this time the Peshwa also attacked. Alivardi Khan paid twenty-two lakh rupees to the Peshwa and with his help expelled Raghuji from his territories. The latter appealed to Shahu against the Peshwa, and got the three provinces placed exclusively under his sphere of influence. After this, in 1744, Raghuji sent Bashkar Rao again to attack Murshidabad. But the Marathas were defeated and Bhaskar Rao was treacherously murdered. The next year Raghuji himself marched and captured Orissa, but in a fight against Alivardi Khan he was also defeated. Bhonsle occupied Orissa again in 1746 and appointed Mir Habib its Governor. The latter died in 1752 and Bhonsle took over the administration of Orissa,¹ while the spoliation by the Marathas in the other two provinces continued.

Alivardi Khan was a great soldier and ruler. But he also could not escape the Maratha arms, and if Bengal and Bihar still continued with him, he could not escape the Maratha *chauth* which he had to pay in addition to some other charges imposed on him.

1. Nandkarni, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

"Politically the Maratha invasions produced two effects. Firstly, these invasions kept Alivardi occupied mainly with war with the Marathas, instigated sedition in his own officers and weakened the government of Bengal, and thus giving time and scope, paved the way for the rise of the English in Bengal. Secondly, they created a sort of anarchical atmosphere in Orissa for about a decade. . . In such a state of insecurity and anxiety people were not always free to pursue their own profession of life."¹

The Rajput Policy

In the Rajput policy of the Marathas, there was a change in the time of Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao. Thus whereas his predecessors aiming to establish *Hindu Pad Padshahi* in India, tried to befriend Hindus all over the country, in the time of the new Peshwa this aim degenerated into petty selfish interests of the individuals, with the result that even the Rajputs were alienated from them and in the battle of Panipat against Ahmed Shah Abdali the Marathas were left alone to accomplish as much as they could.

The story of an open breach between the Marathas and the Rajputs may be traced from the death of the Maratha's friend Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur in 1743. He was succeeded by his eldest son Ishwari Singh whom his younger son Madho Singh opposed. The latter won the support of the Mewar ruler, Jagat Singh, who was his maternal uncle, and also approached the Marathas for help. The Marathas were quite willing to respond favourably to this approach, but the elder brother offered them a bigger reward and they went over to him. In the ensuing clash between the two, the elder brother won. But the younger brother did not lose his heart. In addition to the support of his maternal uncle, he won the help of Ummad Singh of Bundi and was also able to divide the Marathas into two groups. Malhar Rao Holkar coming completely to his side while Jayyapa Sindhia remained with Ishwari Singh. In another battle fought at Rajmahal in 1747, he was again worsted.

Madho Singh still carried on his struggle and now approached the Peshwa who personally marched to Jaipur and persuaded the elder brother to cede the areas of four mahals to the younger one. But after the Peshwa returned to Poona, Ishwari Singh refused to fulfil the promise, with the result that Malhar Rao Holkar had to capture the said territories and hand them over to Madho. The trouble, however, did not end there. Holkar also imposed a tribute on Ishwari Singh which he could not pay and the Marathas had to wage war in 1750 to realise the arrears. Ishwari Singh was in a desperate situation, He could neither fight the Marathas nor flecce his people to meet their financial charges. He found escape by taking poison to end his life.

1, Ray, B.C., *Orissa under Marathas 1751-1803* Allahabad, 1960, p. 20-21.

After the death of Ishwari Singh, Madho Singh came to power in Jaipur. But by this time he had been fully enlightened on the real character of the Marathas. Instead of relying on their friendship, he determined on their destruction, and inviting a few thousand of them inside the city on some pretext, he had them put to the sword. This enraged the Marathas who started a regular conquest of the Rajput territory. But soon, being invited by Safdar Jang, the Mughal Wazir, to the north, they accepted an apology and some compensation from the Rajput prince and left. Shortly after, however, they again appeared before Jaipur, with the result that Madho Singh was compelled to contact Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh, and Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan for help. The latter's invasion of India in 1759 compelled the Marathas to retreat from Jaipur, and later on to face a destruction at his hands at Panipat in 1761.

Marwar

In return for the Maratha help against Ahmed Shah Abdali, Safdar Jang agreed to recognise their hold over Ajmer. The agreement, however, was not ratified by the Emperor, and therefore the ruler of Marwar would not cede Ajmer to the Marathas. The latter got an opportunity when Raja Abhai Singh of Marwar died, and in a contest for power between Bakhat Singh and Ram Singh, the latter finding his position weak approached Jayyapa Sindhia for help. As Sindhia prepared to march in September 1752 Bakhat Singh died and was succeeded by his son Bijay Singh whom the Maratha chief pursued vigorously putting the whole of Marwar under utter devastation. Bijay Singh approached the Mughal Emperor, the Rohillas and Madho Singh of Jaipur to come to his help. Madho Singh came to his rescue and Bijay Singh continued resisting the Maratha arms for about a year, till the two sides began negotiations. A Rajput mission appeared before Sindhia, but during the discussions for terms of peace Sindhia was murdered in July 1755. The members of the mission were suspected and were all put to death. Bijay Singh protested expressing the innocence of the Rajputs, and the hostilities were resumed. It was not before February 1756 that finally the peace was concluded by Dattaji, the younger brother of Jayyapa Sindhia who now returned to Poona.

Under the terms of the agreement signed in 1756, the Marwar chief ceded Ajmer to the Marathas and agreed to pay rupees fifty lakh as indemnity. The kingdom of Marwar was divided between Bijay Singh and Ram Singh, the former parting with half of Marwar and Jalore, while retaining the rest of the territories to himself.

Raghunath Rao and the Jats

Suraj Mal, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur had a prosperous state in the north, and Raghunath Rao, also known as Raghoba, the brother of the Peshwa, wanted to enrich himself at its cost. Suraj Mal had

also interfered in the Rajput politics in favour of Ishwari Singh which antagonised the Marathas towards him. The extension of his hold over Agra also was an eyesore, and the opportunity to march against him was offered when the Mughal Wazir Safdar Jang requested the Jat Raja's help against the Emperor, while Imad-ul-Mulk, the Mir Bakhshi requested the Maratha support for the Emperor against the rising influence of Suraj Mal.

As Raghoba prepared to send his troops against Suraj Mal, the latter offered to pay him forty lakh rupees to save his country from the Maratha ravages. Raghoba was not satisfied, and despatched Malhar Rao Holkar who besieged the Jat Raja at Kumbher. Suraj Mal still carried on his pretensions to the friendship of the Marathas, and in the meanwhile approached the Emperor himself in this connection. There was a possibility of the Emperor staging a *volte face*, and the Marathas afraid of this agreed to conclude peace on the Jat Raja's offer to pay thirty lakh rupees in three equal yearly instalments.

As the result of their policy, the Marathas succeeded in alienating even the Jats against them. Despite this, however, the Jat Raja offered to help Bhau when the latter marched against Ahmed Shah at Panipat. The overbearing attitude of the Maratha chief, however, made it possible for him to continue in his camp, and he retraced his steps. After the Marathas were defeated and some of them were able to escape destruction at the Afghan hands, the Jat Raja gave refuge to those who came to him.

The Carnatic

The Marathas also secured ascendancy in the Carnatic when Dost Ali, the Nawab of that place attacked a descendant of Shivaji's family, Partap Singh the Raja of Tanjore, for which the Maratha troops under Sadashiv Rao Bhau, the son of the great Maratha General Chimnaji, gave the Nawab a battle in which the latter was killed. Marching further, the Marathas besieged Trichinopoly which was held by Chanda Sahib, the brother-in-law of Safdar Ali, who succeeded to the Carnatic throne after the death of his father Dost Ali. Chanda was taken away a prisoner to Poona, while Murari Rao was appointed by the Marathas as the new Governor of Trichinopoly. Although Carnatic was not directly occupied by the Marathas, their sway now was established between the rivers Tungabhadra and Krishna.

The Marathas also marched against Salabat Jang who succeeded to power at Hyderabad after the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1748. In a bid to replace Salabat Jang, they secured the appointment of Salabat's elder brother Ghazi-ud-Din who was at Delhi, but meanwhile he was poisoned to death by one of his step-mothers with the result that Salabat continued in power. In a bid to wrest some territories from the Nizam, the Marathas marched against him, but were

defeated by troops which had been trained under the French General Bussy. Later on, however, when Bussy was recalled to fight against the British in the Third Carnatic War, the Marathas got an opportunity, and marching under the command of Bhau they inflicted a crushing defeat on Salabat Jang at Udgir in 1758.

As a result of this defeat, Salabat Jang ceded to the Marathas the fort of Asirgarh, Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Daultabad and Burhanpur and promised to pay an annual tribute. This established the reputation of Sadashiv Rao Bhau who was later on nominated by the Peshwa to march against Ahmed Shah Abdali. Besides, the Maratha power having been consolidated in the south, they were free now to satisfy their aspirations in the north.

Relations with Mughals

After the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1748 when Nasir Jang succeeded to power at Hyderabad, a rival party in Delhi led by Javid Khan invited him to fight against Safdar Jang, the Wazir. In these circumstances the Wazir contacted the Peshwa under whose instructions Sindhia and Holkar blockaded Nasir's passage to Delhi and in this way saved the position of Safdar Jang.

Another contact between the Marathas and the Mughals was made in 1751 when Afghans and Rohillas in the Doab revolted against the Emperor and defeated Safdar Jang in a battle. The Rohillas also invited Ahmed Shah Abdali to invade India, promising him their full support. The Wazir contacted the Marathas again and with their help vanquished the Afghans.

As Ahmed Shah invaded the Punjab, defeated Muin-ul-Mulk, the Governor, and threatened to march to Delhi, demanding from the Emperor the cession of the two provinces of Lahore and Multan, the Marathas signed an agreement with the Mughals in 1752 under which they were to help them against an internal uprising and an external aggression, in return for which the Peshwa was appointed as the Governor of Ajmer and Agra, and was permitted to realise *chauth* from Lahore and Multan, as also from Sindh and some districts of Hissar and Moradabad. Although this agreement was not ratified by the Emperor who ceded Lahore and Multan to Ahmed Shah, yet it established the Maratha claims over the territories above enumerated, and brought them into clash with the Rajput and other chiefs who were in actual possession of them.

Ahmed Shah Abdali having returned after the cession to him of the provinces of Lahore and Multan, the Marathas tried to make use of their presence in Delhi by persuading the Emperor to appoint Ghazi-ud-Din, the elder brother of Nasir Jang, as the Viceroy at Hyderabad in supersession to the latter. Ghazi-ud-Din promised to pay them thirty lakh rupees in return. Here again, however, the

Marathas failed to make any gain, for, as we have seen, Ghazi-ud-Din was shortly after poisoned by one of his step-mothers, and Nasir Jang remained the Nizam of Hyderabad.

INVASIONS OF AHMED SHAH ABDALI AND THE THIRD BATTLE OF PANIPAT, 1761

The most important event of the time of Balaji Baji Rao, however, was the Third Battle of Panipat which gave a severe blow to the rising ambitions of the Marathas in the north and paved the way for the subsequent development of the British power in India. It took place in 1761 between the Afghan ruler, Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Marathas, in which the latter were defeated.

Before we come to the actual event and the immediate circumstances under which it took place, it would not be out of place briefly to trace the early career of the Abdali chief and his early invasions of India. Born in 1724, Ahmed Shah belonged to the Sadozai clan of Afghanistan, the members of which were generally known as Abdalis, or the servants of Ali, as they had formerly embraced the Shia faith, though later on they were converted to the Sunni belief. Ahmed Shah was the son of Zaman Shah, and when his elder brother who was in the service of Nadir Shah, reached a position of eminence, he also secured a job for his younger brother, and Ahmed soon showing a marked personal gallantry, became Nadir Shah's personal slave. After some time Ahmed Shah was raised to the command of 1,000 men and due to his faithfulness and services, when Nadir Shah invaded India, he appointed him the chief commander of his personal contingent of 6,000. An interesting story is told about Ahmed who happened to meet Asaf Jah, a Mughal noble, at Delhi. This person possessed the faculty of reading men's faces and predicted that Ahmed Durrani would one day become a king.¹ It proved correct, when Nadir Shah was murdered on 19 June 1747, Ahmed took the opportunity and became the first king of the independent kingdom of Afghanistan.

Ahmed Shah was an upstart who had to divert the attention of the Afghans lest they should fall on him. The Afghans delighted in adventures in the distant lands; and the expense of the huge armies that Ahmed maintained, told heavily on his exchequer, and the Indian silver and gold invited him to solve his financial problems. Just when Ahmed Shah wanted to invade India, he received an invitation from the Lahore Governor, Shahnawaz Khan, who had captured power in the Punjab which was not liked by the Delhi Wazir Qamar-ud-Din who prepared to oust him. Because of these reasons he led his first invasion of India in January 1748. In a battle at Manupur, about ten miles north-west of Sarhind, the Wazir was

2. See Chhabra, G S., *Study in History of the Punjab*, 1960, p. 377.

killed by a cannon shot, but his son, Muin-ul-Mulk drove out the Durrani from the Punjab, and was appointed Governor of that province as a reward.

The Durrani led his second invasion early in 1750, but retired only from the frontiers after some territories he demanded were ceded to him. He led his third invasion in 1751 when he suddenly appeared before Lahore, defeated Muin-ul-Mulk and captured him, but pardoned him because of his bravery and re-appointed him as the Governor of Lahore on his own behalf. He also sent his forces against Kashmir, occupied the valley and retired.

Abdali led his fourth invasion in 1756 when Mughlani Begum, who had succeeded her husband Muin-ul Mulk after his death, invited him to save her from the other contestants for power. She wrote to him : "Crores worth of cash and gold are buried in my late father-in-law's house, besides large quantities of silver and gold inside the ceilings, which is in my knowledge. There are serious differences among the Emperor Alamgir II, his wazirs and nobles, and if you invade India at this time, you will be able to capture the whole Empire of India with all its riches worth crores of rupees, without incurring any expenditure yourself."¹ Abdali marched to Delhi unopposed; plundered every house as guided by Mughlani; sacked Mathura and Brindaban where for seven days the water of the Jumna was red due to bloodshed and mounds of dead bodies were witnessed by a contemporary writer; and after forcibly marrying Hazrat Begum, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Muhammad Shah, and appointing Imad-ul-Mulk as wazir at Delhi, he retired carrying the plundered goods on 28,000 camels, elephants, mules, bullocks and carts. His 80,000 horse and foot was each fully loaded with spoils. "For securing transport, the Afghan King left no horse or camel in any one's house, not even a donkey."²

Durrani left behind his own eleven-year-old son Timur, as the Governor of Lahore; with Jahan Khan, the Durrani Commander-in-chief, as his assistant. Adina Beg was appointed faujdar of the Jullundur Doab

Immediate Circumstances

Immediate circumstances of the Third Battle of Panipat were as follows. The Marathas, as we have already seen had signed an agreement with the Mughals in 1752 under which they undertook to help the Emperor against internal uprisings of the Rohillas, etc., and external aggressions, in return for which the right to levy *chauth* from Punjab, Sind and the Doab was given to them, and the Peshwa was appointed the Governor of Agra and Ajmer. Holkar and

1, Ali-ud-din, *Ibrat Namah* (1854), p. 1146.

2 Gupta, H.R., *History of the Sikhs*, i, pp. 102-103. (foot notes)



The Maratha Empire at its climax after their occupation of Punjab

Sindhia who had signed this agreement, thereafter retired to the south to report to the Peshwa whose brother, Raghunath Rao, left for Delhi in October 1756 to fulfil the Maratha obligations. In the meanwhile the Rohilla chief Najib-ud-Daula appealed to Ahmed Shah for help. Abdali led his fourth invasion, plundered Delhi, Mathura and Brindaban and retired after appointing Timur, his son, as the Governor of the Punjab, and Adina Beg as chief of the Jullundur Doab. Raghunath Rao, or Raghoba had not by that time reached Delhi, and therefore, could not be of any help. After reaching Delhi, Raghoba established sway over that city, alienating many Mughal nobles whose jealousy facilitated Ahmed Shah's march into India once again when Najib-ud-Daula declared the struggle against the Marathas a struggle for the protection of Islam, won over Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh to his side and invited the Abdali chief.

In the meanwhile the developments in the Punjab also compelled the Durrani to lead his fifth invasion of India. Adina Beg revolted against the authority of Timur and invited the Marathas to expel the Afghans from the Punjab. Timur had already suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Sikhs. Therefore when Raghoba marched into Punjab, the Afghans fled the country, leaving the Marathas to appoint Adina Beg as the Governor of Lahore and Abdus Samad Khan as that of Sarhind. The Maratha arms now spread right up to Attock and Raghoba planned even to capture Afghanistan, though luckily he did not try to execute his design.

Soon after Adina Beg died, and now the Marathas appointed Sabaji as the Governor of the Punjab. Ahmed Shah at this time was busy fighting against the Persians. Therefore he sent Jahan Khan to occupy Punjab once again. But the latter was defeated jointly by Sabaji and the Sikhs.

The Marathas remained in the Punjab for about two years, but made no arrangements to give an efficient administration to the country. The Peshwa was too engrossed in the politics of the south even to visit the north personally. In these circumstances while at least a hundred thousand soldiers were needed to hold the Punjab and defend it against the Durrani, they placed only 15,000 who were divided into three parts of 5,000 each, one under Sabaji as a mobile force, the second under Tukoji Holkar at Lahore and the third under Bapuji Trimbak at Multan. But none of these was a General of the calibre of Ahmed Shah.

A defeat at the hands of the Sikhs and the Marathas only strengthened Jahan Khan's resolve to re-occupy the Punjab for his master's son, Timur. Shortly after, therefore, he marched once again with a force much larger than before. It was a critical time for which, his available troops in the Punjab being scattered, Sabaji was not prepared. He remained at Batala, and without firing a single

shot, Jahan Khan reached Wazirabad. The Marathas fled the country leaving it to its fate.

Ahmed Shah Durrani himself reached Lahore at the head of a large army in October 1759. When all deserted the Punjab in an utterly disgraceful haste, the Sikhs came forward and the Durrani had to lose as many as about two thousand during the course of his march through the Punjab.

Abdali appointed Jarchi Karim Dad Khan as Incharge of Lahore; and appointing Raja Ghumand Chand of Kangra as the Governor of the Jullundur Doab, he crossed the Sutlej. It was only at Taraori that the Marathas tried to arrest his march, but they were utterly routed, and leaving behind 400 killed, they fled the battlefield on 24 December. Abdali reached near Delhi where some Rohillas joined him. He continued his march against the Marathas. Dattaji Sindhia met him at Berari Ghat on the Jumna, but was slain and his soldiers fled. Malhar Rao Holkar met him on 4 March 1760, but was defeated. Abdali occupied Delhi and then approached Anup Shahar on the border of Oudh where Shuja-ud-Daula joined him with his forty thousand foot and horse. Here he awaited a Maratha force from Poona.

The Battle

As the news of the repeated Maratha disasters reached Poona, a very large force of the Marathas was prepared by the Peshwa and sent under the command of Sada Shiva Rao Bhau, then only a youth of 30 summers, to reestablish Maratha hold on the north. Bhau marched on Delhi on 22 July, and the city fell before him. Rejecting all reasonable offers of peace, and in a fit a youthful frenzy, he proceeded towards the north to meet the Durrani. But the latter took advantage of Bhau's blunder of not putting the fords of the Jumna under proper guards, suddenly crossed the river and reached Panipat. Bhau also had to retrace his steps and move towards that place.

At Panipat, the two armies encamped facing each other. Bhau's troops, according to Latif, "numbered 3,00,000 men, including the cavalry in their regular pay, which numbered 55,000, predatory horse, regular infantry and contingents from the allied states. They had also three hundred pieces of cannon. The troops under Abdali consisted of 40,000 Afghans and Persians. 13,000 Indian cavalry and 38,000 Indian infantry, with about 70 pieces of cannon borrowed from Indian allies."¹

Here both sides tried to cut off the supplies of the other. About 12,000 Marathas under Govind Rao Bundela spread over the country

1. Latif, *History of the Punjab* p. 236; Chhabra *op. cit.*, p. 430.

and blocked almost all the Afghan lines of supply. The utter want of supplies was beginning to tell on the Afghans when Atai Khan Popalzie suddenly fell upon Govind Rao's camp and completely destroyed it. The Afghans thus restored their lines of communication, and it was now for the Marathas to suffer from the want of them. For over three months the opposing armies lay encamped before each other when ultimately the Marathas began to starve. "Surrounded by carcasses of animals, dying cattle, hungry followers, and hemmed in their camp, their embarrassments were becoming unbearable . . . At length the great Maratha chief, worried by extreme distress, surrounded the Bhau's tent and entreated him to put an end to their miseries by a sortie."¹

Bhau was now forced to come out of his entrenchment and lead an attack upon the Afghans. Shouting *Har Har Jai Mahadev* the Marathas fell on the Afghans. In the earlier stages they seemed to be in a favourable position, but ultimately they were defeated. Bhau Viswas Rao, the eldest son of the Peshwa and many other chiefs lost their lives. According to Latif about 2,00,000 of the Marathas were slain, 22,000 were taken prisoners, while 50,000 horse and an immense booty fell into the Afghan hands.

Causes of Maratha Defeat

"This great battle, which has been surpassed by few in carnage, with its disastrous issue for the Marathas, sealed the fate of that aspiring nation."² There were several factors which led to this Maratha disaster. First and the foremost factor contributing to the failure of the Marathas was their young and hot-blooded leadership. Despite all the commanding genius that Bhau possessed, he after all was a young man with an inclination towards hasty decisions and incapability to accept defeat. After his first victory at Delhi he seemed to have turned mad with enthusiasm and wild plans of defeating the Durrani and establishing his sway over the whole of India. No offers of a peaceful settlement could satisfy his reason and ambition. The advice of the veterans was something which he looked at only with disdain. He rather distrusted their intellect and experience and considered himself alone, with the result that everything centred around his own whims. Moreover, he was ignorant of the climate of northern India. He possessed poor knowledge of Indian geography and was ignorant of the habits and life of this part of the country. When he left Delhi to meet the Durrani, he committed one of those blunders which ultimately sealed the Maratha fate. Nothing was done to protect and guard the fords on the river Jumna, and as Bhau marched towards the north, the Durrani quietly crossed that river and entrenched himself at Panipat.

1. *ibid* , p. 237.

2. *ibid.*, p. 238.

Moreover, of such a large army that Bhau possessed, only about ten thousand Marathas under Govind Rao were assigned the duty of securing supplies and cutting off the enemy's lines of communication. And yet more, when the entire strategy of the battle centred around logistic planning Bhau failed to organise support for Govind Rao in the emergency. Their poor intelligence service ill-served them, and in a surprise attack Govind Rao's camp was destroyed early one morning and the supply lines of the Marathas cut off to force them into a desperate action.

In the midst of the battle when Vishwas Rao, the eldest son of the Peshwa was killed, Bhau dismounted his elephant to mourn over the slain body of his nephew. Besides exhibiting a poor Generalship in such mournings over comparatively a trivial loss, he overlooked the need of keeping himself visible to his men who considered him as having been killed and lost their hearts. Once Bhau dismounted from his elephant, he was lost in the common mass of soldiers which was catastrophic to their morale.

Then there was a disunity among Bhau's subordinates, Malhar Rao Holkar, Damaji Gaekwad and Jankoji Sindhia, all were jealous of each other and engaged in intrigue. It was due to this reason that as soon as Bhau dismounted his elephant, Holkar disappeared from the battlefield together with his men.

The home authorities at Poona also seem to have been completely oblivious of the advantages of a proper logistic planning and support. Bhau was ordered to march at a day's notice, and he was to carry with him heavy artillery, a large train of baggage, and families of the officers—as if he was going on a picnic; but no arrangement for boats was made, and surveys were not conducted. Bhau marched, and only when he reached the flooded Jumna the question of the collection of boats was considered and parties were sent out to search for fords. One full precious month of June was thus lost, which being the hottest month of the country, could best have been used to attack the Afghans—the soldiers accustomed to the climates of the mountains. At Delhi again the piteous appeals of Bhau to the Peshwa for the supply of rations when Delhi itself had failed to meet their requirements, met with a failure, for the Peshwa was incapable of meeting the emergent situation.

And then no effort was made to secure Sikh help from the Punjab, nor any Hindu chief of the northern India was manoeuvred into rendering an aid to the Marathas. Rather the best Hindu landlords and chiefs of the Gangetic Doab rose to oppose the Maratha march into their country. And for this, the characteristic habits of the Marathas to ravage and plunder their victims with utter ferocity, without any distinction of creed or belief, was much to blame. The Hindus of northern India, in fact, had already tasted the Maratha rapé and recklessness on many occasions.

On the other hand, opposed to the Marathas were the fierce Afghans who had come far away from their country and for whom, therefore, there was no alternative but to win. In fact in the face of the early attack of the Marathas at Panipat when the Afghans began to flee in confusion, the Grand Wazir of the Durrani called them together and addressed them : "Our country is far off, my friends, whither do you fly ?"¹

And then Ahmed Shah himself was a seasoned General. He knew how to plan and take advantage of the enemy's weakness. Where the Marathas failed to win the support of their own countrymen and co-religionists in northern India, the Durrani invader easily won over to his side the powerful Muslim chiefs such as Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh.

The Significance

In consequence, the Maratha debacle at Panipat, was bound to introduce a violent change in the future course of the Indian history. Although immediately after his victory at Panipat the whole of India lay at the mercy of the Durrani conqueror ; his soldiers mutinied to go home, and having no faith in his Indian allies the Durrani was forced to leave the country without reaping the fruits of his success.

After the Durrani retired, there was no strong power left behind to establish control and the departure of the Durrani and the Marathas created a vacuum. The tottering Mughal power received a further blow, and for eleven years the Mughal emperor remained a fugitive, at the mercy of his protectors. He was a refugee in Oudh when in 1765 Clive secured from him the Dewani rights of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and took him under his own protection. It was not before 1771 that he reached back Delhi and occupied his throne, supported once again by the Marathas.

The Marathas had been steadily spreading their influence and hoped that soon the whole of India would pass under their control and they would establish a national Maratha empire. But this was not to be. The huge army of the Marathas was completely destroyed, only a few thousands of them escaped to face the miseries of a long journey before they reached back home

The most important of the Maratha leaders laid down their lives fighting at Panipat, or as a result of the shock of their defeat. This gave an opportunity to Raghunath Rao, the most infamous Maratha character, to develop his influence. It was this man who sold away the Maratha freedom into the British hands and cleared the way for the extension of the British sway.

1. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

The blow the Marathas received at Panipat, took them full one decade to recover, when they re-occupied Delhi. But in the meanwhile much had happened. Their debacle cleared the way for the British who established their supremacy in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as a result of the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765; Oudh fell at their mercy and they planned to establish their hold on Delhi.

Another result of the battle was the complete elimination of the Marathas from the Punjab, which left the Sikhs free to establish their sway all over that province. Their Rakhi system developed into the establishment of twelve different principalities one of which later on raised a standard of monarchy all over the rest.

The Sikhs continued to develop their power and ultimately succeeded in establishing their kingdom on the land of five rivers. The English continued to expand their hold and ultimately succeeded in establishing an empire in India. The Maratha power was ousted from the Indian scene, and it degenerated from a national force into petty local principalities, one of which later on established the Maratha sway over Delhi till finally it was taken over by the British.

It was at Bhilsa that on 24 January 1761 the Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao got the news of the Maratha defeat at Panipat. He was at the time bringing some reinforcement for Bhau, had proceeded a few stages ahead, when the news was confirmed that all was over, and none now remained to receive the reinforcement. He retraced his steps to Poona, bemoaning the heavy losses that the Marathas had suffered, and died there on 23 June 1761. Some say it was the shock of the Panipat debacle that took his life.

Balaji Baji Rao's achievements were great. It was during his time that the Peshwaship legally became hereditary. "The Peshwa has sometimes been blamed for having deposed the heir of Shivaji the Great, but it must be admitted that he picked the crown out of the gutter and not from anybody's brow."¹

It was during his time that the Marathas established their supremacy over the Rajputs, the Jats as well as the Mughals. The Maratha arms reached Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and their power in the south was further consolidated. But all these achievements, it must be noted, had the seeds of the ultimate ruin of the Marathas inherent in them. For most of them were made by the Maratha Generals for themselves and not for the Peshwa; and farther the Maratha influence in these circumstances spread, the weaker the central Maratha authority became.

1. Nandkarai, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

Although the Panipat disaster could eclipse the Maratha fortunes for not more than a decade, the initiative the Peshwa lost, permanently went out of his hands. The Peshwa can never be forgiven for his having kept himself too busy in the south. If he had taken a personal interest in the north and not permitted his Generals to alienate the other Hindu chiefs like the Rajputs and the Sikhs against them, the Marathas might have succeeded in establishing *Hindu Padshahi* in India, which also, now became a mere slogan that could not be uttered without an excuse bordering on shame.

SUBSEQUENT INVASIONS OF AHMED SHAH ABDALI

Since we have already discussed the first five invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali in this chapter, it may not be out of place to discuss here his subsequent invasions to complete the story though chronologically it may be misplaced.

The Sixth Invasion

When Abdali retired to Afghanistan after his fifth invasion of India leaving behind particularly in the Punjab, complete chaos and confusion, the Sikhs took this opportunity and occupied Lahore, where-after they marched against Akil Das, an Udasi Mahant of Jandiala, in Punjab, who had been helping the Durrani invader and the Punjab Governors against the Sikhs. Akil Das sent an urgent appeal to Abdali for help. The Afghan ruler already had been incensed at the Sikh occupation of Lahore, and when this appeal for help reached him, he made some of those rapid marches for which he was celebrated, and soon reached Lahore where he established his headquarters and moved towards Jandiala. The Sikhs moved from that place and went towards Sirhind where Zain Khan, its Governor, was attacked. Abdali returned to Lahore, from where covering a distance of 150 miles and crossing two rivers in not more than thirty-six hours, to the utter surprise of the Sikhs, suddenly appeared at Malerkotla on 5 February 1762, about six miles north of which about 50,000 Sikhs lay encamped at the village Kup. The Sikhs were attacked and pursued, and about 24,000 of them were thus killed. This was a terrible Sikh loss. Thereafter Abdali realised a tribute from Raja Ala Singh of Patiala and returned to Lahore. The Sikh Gurdwara at Amritsar was blown away by gunpowder. Here a missile from the blown-up edifice is said to have struck him, upon which he ordered a hasty retreat, but not before polluting the whole area with the entrails and blood of cows and bullocks.

During this time the Abdali also sent two expeditions against Sukhjiwan Mal in Kashmir whom earlier he had appointed Governor, but who now had declared his independence. The second expedition under Nur-ud-Din was successful; the Kashmir Governor was captured, and the valley annexed to the Afghan empire. He appointed *Kabuli Mal* as the Governor of Lahore, recognised Shah

Alam as the Emperor of Delhi and the Peshwa as the supreme power of the Deccan, confirmed Zain Khan as the Governor of Sirhind and Sadat Yar Khan as that of the Jullundur Doab, and after some more clashes with the Sikhs he retired to Afghanistan where an insurrection had broken out.

The Seventh Invasion

When the news of the Sikh occupation of the Sirhind province and its devastation, and plunder of the rest of the Punjab reached Ahmed Shah, he crossed the Indus for the seventh time in December 1764 and soon arrived at Lahore. The Sikhs, however, inflicted heavy losses on the Afghans at Jandiala, Batala and Adinagar. The Shah marched as far as Sirhind, but by this time the month of March had set in and the Indian summer was approaching fast. The Shah was persuaded by his officers to march back to Afghanistan without chastising the Sikhs. He was not, however, going to have a peaceful journey back home either. The Sikhs gave him a pitched battle just when the Afghans crossed the Sutlej. The fight continued for seven days, as the Afghans marched towards their country, and the Sikhs did not withdraw till the Afghans reached Chenab after having suffered heavy losses.

During the time the Shah remained in the Punjab, he destroyed the standing crops in numerous villages. The property of the Sikhs was destroyed and their temples plundered and desecrated.

The Eighth Invasion

As Ahmed Shah retreated after his seventh invasion, the Sikhs occupied Lahore once again and spread all over the province. They even sacked the jagirs of Najib-ud-Daula, the dictator of Delhi, realised a tribute from the Raja of Bharatpur had defeated the Marathas near Dholpur. To restore his authority in the Punjab, Ahmed Shah led his eighth invasion in December 1766.

After crossing the Indus, the Shah routed eight thousand Sikh horse at Beghy, a few miles from Rohtas. This time, however, he was convinced of the futility of his policy of trying to annihilate the rising Sikh power, and tried to placate them by offering to appoint Lehna Singh, who had already occupied Lahore, as the Governor of that city on his own behalf; but failed. This added to his fury which, however, was of no avail. Wherever he went, the Sikhs continued hovering around his camp; and because of this reason when the Shah marched towards Delhi, Najib advised him not to run the risk of his rear being constantly plundered, and try first in Punjab to set his house in order. But the more the Durrani tried to destroy the Sikhs, the bolder they grew. Tact, conciliation and force, all failed to bring this brave nation to reconcile themselves to the Durrani rule. And Ahmed Shah had ultimately to leave this country in utter hopelessness and disgust.

As the plains of the Punjab burnt with the heat of the summer and the rivers started swelling, Ahmed Shah decided to put a hasty end to his activities in this country, and appointing Dadan Khan as the Governor of Lahore, retired to his country, leaving his power in the Punjab unconsolidated, and an easy prey to the ever rising Sikh ambition and power.

The Ninth and Tenth Invasions

As soon as the Durrani retired from Punjab, the Sikhs re-occupied Lahore and spreading all over the Punjab they parcelled out the country among themselves. They even plundered Delhi and the Gangetic Doab and made Najib look completely helpless before them. In these circumstances, in December 1768 Ahmed Shah left Kandahar once again to try to establish his power in the Punjab. But he had grown old now and disruptions in his own country worried him. His soldiers had lost confidence against the Sikhs, the prospects of the terrible heat of the Punjab plains and the swollen rivers of this country robbed them of all their enthusiasm, the falling revenues of India having disabled the Shah from meeting regularly their salary bills, they grew refractory. As he marched, between Kabul and Peshawar a rebellion arose in his army which resulted in the death of many of his important officers and soldiers. A great number of the soldiers were dispersed, and the Shah marched back to Kandahar in a miserable condition, without crossing the Indus.

In December 1769 the Shah decided once again to march to India. He is said to have been led into this decision to divert the attention of the turbulent Afghans. But his soldiers were not prepared to risk a fight with the Sikhs once again. They accompanied him perhaps to escape the bitter cold of Afghanistan and to spend a few days in the more pleasant climate of Peshawar at the Shah's expense. After reaching Peshawar, therefore, they became refractory, and the Shah having lost control over them, was obliged to march back without crossing the Indus once again.

After this he never ventured to lead another expedition to India. He was growing old and his health was failing. He retired to the Achakzai country where, at Murgha, he died on 14 April 1772, and thus ended the long story of fruitless efforts to establish his power in the Punjab, and through it over the rest of India.

Prince Ahmed Shah was good, great and wise. Latif writes of him. "If we compare him with the majority of Asiatic rulers, we find him more lenient and less grasping than those whom he subdued; to his subjects, considerate and just to a degree; to those whom he admitted to his society, affable, hilarious and free; to those who suffered

in his cause, or in any way aided him, bountiful and generous; to the poor and needy, ever friendly and charitable; and to the rebellious more severe than the severest."¹

If one were to count the causes of Ahmed Shah's failure in India, one was his growing age and declining health. He had cancer in his nose which grew with his growing age and ultimately became incurable. Then his generous policy of toleration, high salaries and light taxation in his own country, though giving him the reputation of a kind-hearted, liberal king in his early years, ultimately proved ruinous. His only hope of meeting the expense of his ever increasing number of soldiers in the army was the large booty which fell to his hands as a result of his exploits in India. But as the time passed, the booty grew scarce and the revenues from India fell as a result of the chaotic conditions that obtained in this country. Najib-ud-Daula, his plenipotentiary at Delhi, for instance, paid him only two lakh rupees in seven years, in place of about two crores that he had to pay. It became growingly difficult to meet the salary bills of his army and his soldiers became mutinous.

Nor did his Indian friends and allies remain faithful till his last years. Almost all of them were opportunists and they helped him so long as it suited their purpose. But when they became convinced that the Durrani would not be able to establish his rule in the Punjab because of the Sikhs, they all turned their backs on him. Thus, during his eighth and the last campaign in India, only Najib-ud-Daula is said to have presented himself before him, while the rest turned perfectly deaf ears to his calls.

The determination and iron-will of the Sikhs who made all sacrifices but did not reconcile to a foreign rule, was a strong cause of his failure. They had an advantage over the Afghans in the fact that they were fighting in their own country, while the Afghans were not quite conversant with its geography. The triangular contest between the Afghans, the Mughals and the Marathas also paid them, And they had the sympathy of the masses which the foreigners in the Punjab lacked.

Still Ahmed Shah Abdali's invasions of India had far-reaching effects over the destiny of the country. The tottering Mughal authority in the Punjab and elsewhere received one more severe blow as a result of the appointment of Najib-ud-Daula in Delhi, and as a result of his securing the cession of certain territories from the Indian Emperor. The Mughal treasury was denuded of its riches, and the huge amount of gold and silver collected from India was taken away by the Afghans which must have told heavily on the people. It was as a result of the Third Battle of Panipat in which the Durrani defeated the Marathas, that the ambition of the latter to establish an

1. Latif *op. cit.*, p. 289.

empire all over the country received a crushing blow from which they could not recover before the passage of a decade during which much had happened which gave a new turn to Indian politics. It was during this time when the Maratha influence in the north ceased to exist, that the British defeated the combined power of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh and Mir Kasim the ex-Governor of Bengal at Buxar. Under the treaty of Allahabad signed in 1765, the Mughal Emperor came under the British protection, and the whole of Oudh lay prostrate at their feet. Thereafter they steadily developed their power till they became too formidable for any Indian power to challenge.

The invasions of the Durrani chief also paved the way for the development of the Sikh power in the Punjab. When the Marathas were compelled to withdraw, and Delhi was made too weak to assert its authority, the Sikhs got an opportunity in the Punjab which they made full use of. The foundations of the Sikh power were laid, over which Ranjit Singh later on raised a standard of monarchy.

4

Madhav Rao I

When Balaji Baji Rao died in 1761, he was succeeded as Peshwa by Madhav Rao, his second son who was then only in his seventeenth year. The nominal king of Satara gave his approval. Raghunath Rao, the eldest surviving member of the Peshwa's family became regent of the young Peshwa, while Aba Purandare was made minister. "For the time being it appeared that the Marathas were determined to close their ranks and to make an honest attempt to recover their power and political prestige. Unfortunately. . . Raghunath's ambition, coupled with the weakness of his character and his incurable tendency to be guided by the advice of others, stood in the way of this happy consummation."¹

The state at the time of Madhav Rao's succession, was beset with many difficulties. The recent Panipat debacle had brought the Maratha fortunes to a low ebb. Besides the internal troubles that the young Peshwa had to face at the hands of his uncle Raghoba and other aspiring chiefs, he saw before him the Maratha influence completely vanished from the north, while their enemies in the south, like the Nizam and the rising star Hyder Ali of Mysore, made every effort to benefit from the Maratha misfortune and follow a policy of self-aggrandisement at their cost.

THE INTERNAL SITUATION

Almost the first thing that the new Peshwa had to do was to get rid of the ambitious control of his affairs by his uncle Raghoba. Grant Duff writes : "Raghunath Rao, naturally fond of power, contemplated, with no small satisfaction, the prospect of gratifying his favourite inclination, during the minority of his nephew."²

1. Banerjee, A.C , *Peshwa Madhav Rao I*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 14.

2. Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas*, Ed. S.M. Edwardes, II, p. 533

Raghoba's ambitions clearly came to the surface when during the Peshwa's hostilities with the Nizam, he gave very favourable terms to the latter and concluded peace. If the hostilities had continued a little longer, better advantages should have been secured from the Nizam. But this was not to be. Raghoba was strongly suspected of being secretly in league with the Nizam, some army officers openly criticised him with the result that he resigned from the regency, thinking that he was indispensable, and the Peshwa was bound to call him back. Madhav Rao, however, falsified his hopes and appointing reliable assistants he took over the state administration direct.

This made the situation embarrassing for Raghoba who securing the support of the Nizam and some rebellious chiefs of the Peshwa, such as Janoji Bhonsle, declared an open revolt. In a fight between the nephew and the uncle, the Peshwa was defeated twice and ultimately reconciled with Raghoba after surrendering to him the forts of Daulatabad, Asirgarh, Shivner and Ahmednagar, and by suitably rewarding his adherents like Succa Ram Babu.

Although the uncle still continued troubling the Peshwa one way or the other, he helped him against the Nizam, and was with him when he effectively humbled the Muslim chief at Rakhshabhuvan. He joined Madhav Rao during his first march to Carnatic, but his attitude became unreliable as the time passed. When the Peshwa marched into the Carnatic for the second time, he got information about the adverse activities of Raghoba and had to save the situation by calling him to the war front and asking him to take command of the expedition. Here again, however, he alienated the Peshwa by giving favourable terms to Hyder Ali of Mysore which he did not deserve. His activities became yet more unbearable when he started raising an independent army and suddenly came out with the demand for a part of the Peshwa's dominions.

Madhav Rao tried to appease his uncle by offering him some responsible administrative functions, though he flatly refused to divide with him his paternal territories. Instead of trying to see reason in his attitude and coming to terms with his nephew, Raghoba started negotiating with Hyder Ali, the Nizam and Bhonsle, and even contacted the British for a hostile alliance against him. Madhav Rao had to pick up the challenge, and renouncing his activities against the external enemies for a while, he asked his trusted lieutenants, Sindhia, Holkar and Gopal Rao to teach him a lesson. Raghoba was then at Dhodap where a battle was fought in June 1768 and the Peshwa was victorious. Raghunath Rao was taken a prisoner to Poona where he was kept in that state. A suitable allowance was fixed for him, and his power to create mischief effectively brought to an end. All his evil advisers were handled one by one and given exemplary punishments.

Another internal enemy that the Peshwa had to face was Janoji Bhonsle of Nagpur who had joined Raghoba against the Peshwa, but after his reconciliation with the nephew, had remained in alliance with the Nizam. The Peshwa, however, won him over by offering a jagir worth thirty-two lakh rupees per annum. At the battle of Rakshashabhuvan against the Nizam, Bhonsle was with the Peshwa, and thirty-two lakh revenue worth of the territories wrested from the Muslim chief were given to him as a reward for his loyalty.

Bhonsle, however, still continued his hostilities towards the Peshwa, and entered into secret contacts with Hyder Ali against him. Madhav Rao had to win the support of the Nizam and march against him. Bhonsle was humbled in 1766, but as the result of Raghoba's intercession on his behalf, a comparatively light punishment was imposed on him. He had to surrender the Nizam's territories worth twenty-four lakhs, that he had secured after Rakshashabhuvan. Of these territories the Peshwa got those worth only nine lakhs, while those worth fifteen lakhs were restored to the Nizam. This action of the Peshwa earned him some criticism of being an opportunist who could befriend even an enemy for a mutual gain against his own subordinate. But perhaps the Peshwa had no alternative.

Bhonsle, however, still did not learn a lesson. His minister Diwajipant exercised a pernicious influence on him, and he joined Raghoba when the latter raised an independent army to fight against the Peshwa. When Raghoba was humbled at Dhodap in June 1768 and taken a prisoner, the Peshwa attacked Nagpur and laid waste the whole of his territories. He had to sue for peace, and the treaty of Kanakapur was signed in 1769, under which Bhonsle acknowledged the Peshwa's suzerainty, agreed to help him against his enemies, surrendered the remaining part of the Nizam's territories that he still had in his possession, and promised never again to create trouble for him. So long as Madhav Rao lived, he never again had to face any active hostility from this side.

Of the other trouble makers, one was the pretender Sadashiv Rao Bhau who, it may be remembered, had led the Maratha forces to the battle of Panipat where he was reported to have been killed, though his body never had been identified. Sukh Lal, an Akanoji Brahman, appeared towards the end of 1761, and pretended to be Bhau. Some minor officials in Bundelkhand certified it and the man collected some support, started levying contributions and tributes which caused a sensation at Poona. Enquiries establishing his true character proved of no avail, and it took quite some time before he confessed the guilt and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Babu Naik Joshi, an old Maratha officer who had seen the rise of the Peshwas from the time of Shahu's release, looked at Madhav Rao with jealous eyes and was found in conspiracy with Hyder Ali

and other Maratha enemies. The Peshwa sent his troops under Ram Chandar Ganesh who occupied his important forts in March 1766 and left him with a small jagir at Baramati to live the remaining years of his life in penitence.

Nizam Ali of Hyderabad

Simultaneously with internal enemies, the young Peshwa also had to deal with his external foes who were out to take advantage of every misfortune of the Marathas. One such foe was the Nizam of Hyderabad who, desiring to take full advantage of the Maratha debacle of Panipat, re-occupied some of the territories he had earlier lost to them. Supported by some Maratha deserters of the Peshwa, he marched on Poona, and the Peshwa's family and treasury had to be removed to a safer place till the Peshwa was able to humble the Nizam in a battle in 1762. Through the intercession of Raghoba, however, the Nizam was able this time to escape the punishment he deserved.

Later on, however, as the differences between the Peshwa and Raghunath Rao developed, on the latter's approach the Nizam was found too willing to join forces against Madhav Rao once again. The Peshwa succeeded in winning back his uncle, Raghoba, but the Nizam still continued making preparations against him. He had the support of some important Maratha deserters like Janoji Bhonsle, and at one stage he became so emboldened as to demand from the Peshwa the surrender of all the territories east of the river Bhima, restoration of the jagirs of the Maratha chiefs who were supporting him, appointment of his own nominee as the Peshwa's regent, and other such considerations which stunned the Peshwa and his supporters. A war with him was imminent and the Peshwa decided to move personally to disabuse his enemies of their ideas of his weakness due to his young age or personal character. He won back almost all the Maratha deserters who had joined the Nizam, suddenly marched his forces into the Nizam's territory and subjected it to an utter pillage. Personally prescribing and supervising all the details of attack and defence, the Peshwa gave the Nizam a battle at Rakhshasbhuvan on the Godavari where he secured a resounding victory. On 25 September 1763, the Peshwa forced on the Nizam the peace terms of Aurangabad under which he was made to surrender all the territories occupied since Panipat and many more, the total worth of which was about 82 lakh rupees of revenue per annum. Part of these territories, as we have already seen, were given away to Janoji Bhonsle for the support he gave to the Peshwa.

The Treaty of Aurangabad, writes Dr Banerjee, "deserves to be regarded as a landmark in the history of the Marathas. So far as the relations between Poona and Hyderabad are concerned, the state of things inaugurated by it lasted up to the battle of Kharda (1795). Never again did the Nizam venture to invade the Peshwa's dominions

Secondly, as a contemporary news-writer observed, this brilliant success of the Marathas impressed the Deccan as well as Hindustan. This was, indeed the first proclamation of Maratha revival after the disaster of Panipat. Finally, this victory brought about a very significant change in the domestic affairs of the Maratha Empire. It closed the period of Raghunath Rao's regency and marked the beginning of Madhav Rao's independent career. It became clear to all that in spite of his lack of experience, this young ruler was great alike in war and diplomacy and possessed to the fullest degree those qualities of leadership which his uncle totally lacked."¹

Hyder Ali of Mysore

Hyder Ali was another chief who took advantage of the Maratha troubles, and usurping power of the Hindu Raja of Mysore, occupied several Maratha territories including those in Carnatic worth fifty lakh rupees of revenue. In January 1762 the first expedition to the Carnatic was sent under the leadership of Raghunath Rao. The Peshwa also accompanied him. A tribute was realised from the territories like Kittur and Bidnur, and action was taken against Hyder who, however, refused to stand a sustained pitched battle and withdrew to a forest. The rainy season in the meanwhile approached and the Marathas withdrew to Poona without having punished Hyder Ali.

Hasty withdrawal by the Marathas emboldened Hyder Ali, who winning the support of the Nizam and some rebellious Maratha chiefs, entered into a career of capturing the Maratha posts to the south of the river Krishna. He occupied Bidnur, Sunda and Karnul, etc., garrisoned all the forts with well-equipped soldiers and provision, and prepared to face another Maratha march into the Carnatic.

In the meanwhile the Peshwa having secured his final victory over the Nizam and strengthened his position at Poona, gave serious thought to curbing the ambitious activities of Hyder. He collected a huge army, and placing himself at the head of it, taking Succa Ram Bapu as his chief adviser, he crossed the Krishna in February 1764, and instead of wasting time in besieging the fortified places, began to lay waste the country. He won to his side the discontented Nawab of Savanur who had recently suffered at the hands of Hyder.

Hyder Ali would not, however, accept an offer of a pitched battle with the Marathas and took shelter in an impenetrable forest in a bid to harass the Marathas and wear them out. The Peshwa had to resort to strategy. Gopal Rao appeared before Hyder at the head of only 4,000 soldiers, the latter taking an opportunity, marched out to destroy this small Maratha army. Gopal Rao slowly retraced

1. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

his steps pursued by the enemy and suddenly brought him face to face with the main Maratha troops under the Peshwa numbering about 50,000. In the battle that followed, Hyder lost about 2,000 killed and wounded, against the Maratha losses of only 250, before he could withdraw.

The rainy season approached again, but this time instead of withdrawing, the Peshwa decided, to the disappointment of his enemy, to come to terms with Hyder. He took Haveri and Dharwar, and on 1 December 1764 engaged the enemy at Jadi Hanwati in a decisive battle, wounding Hyder himself and killing 2,000 of his men in the battle field.

The blow that Hyder suffered at Jadi Hanwati, was severe. But back at home, the Peshwa got the news that Raghunath Rao was planning to bring about his ruin. He called him to the Carnatic and invited him to take command of the expedition. After this the Marathas occupied several important posts of the enemy, like Honnali, Anantpur and Chitaldrug, and marched towards Bidnur where the enemy had shut himself up. Peace overtures from Hyder arrived, and just when a little more effort should have completely destroyed the enemy, Raghunath Rao signed a treaty in March 1765 under which peace was concluded at Anantpur.

Under the treaty thus signed, (1) Hyder Ali agreed to pay a tribute of thirty lakh rupees, (2) ceded to the Marathas all the territories to the north of the river Tungabhadra, and (3) undertook never again to trouble Murar Rao and the Nawab of Savanur who had become Maratha vassals.

Raghoba was criticised for the peace terms accepted from Hyder. But his arguments were that the Nizam had started creating trouble again, the British at Bombay plundered some Maratha territories, and the road to Bidnur passed through a jungle which was not safe to pass. The Peshwa also was reconciled because he had given authority to his uncle to do what he liked.

The Marathas, however, had yet to recover all their territories south of the Krishna, while Hyder Ali was too ambitious a man to reconcile to the position in which he was placed. He approached the British for help. But the latter did not give an encouraging reply, though they looked askance at the Marathas and would not like to suffer their becoming a strong power at the cost of Hyder who stood as a check on their ambitions against them. Hyder's generals plundered the Carnatic possessions of the Marathas, with the result that in January 1767 the Peshwa once again crossed the Krishna and took Sira, Madgiri, Haskote, Nandigarh and other posts and compelled him once again to sue for peace.

Under the new agreement signed early in May 1767, (1) Hyder Ali undertook to pay thirty-one lakh rupees to the Marathas by

instalments, (2) and the Peshwa retained several places like Madgiri and Haskote, and returned some others like Sira and Nandigarh to Hyder Ali.

Early in 1769 yet another expedition had to be sent against Hyder Ali who had been getting more ambitious as a result of his recent successes against the British. Hyder Ali inflicted some losses on the Marathas till in October 1769 the Peshwa himself appeared at the head of a large Maratha army. Hyder Ali followed a scorched earth policy by destroying all means of supply on the possible Maratha route of march. The Peshwa, however, followed an alternative route and pillaged his country far and wide. Several important posts of Hyder fell before him, but the hostilities this time were prolonged. The Peshwa returned to Poona leaving Trimbakji and Gopal Rao in charge of the operations. This emboldened Tipu, the son of Hyder, who inflicted some losses on the Marathas at Moti Lalab and Malukote in the earlier part of 1771 but was ultimately compelled to retreat to his capital Srirangapatam, on the way suffering a heavy loss of about twelve thousand casualties.

The Marathas were now definitely in a superior position, and had they pressed their advantages, Srirangapatam itself should have fallen. But unluckily Gopal Rao died, dissensions among the Marathas became sharp, their siege of Hyder Ali's capital made no head-way. Peshwa at Poona became seriously ill and wanted the hostilities to be brought to an end, and therefore in April 1772 a new agreement was signed under which Hyder paid the Marathas twenty-five lakh rupees in cash and handed some jewellery which was said to be worth six lakhs. In addition, he promised to pay another nineteen lakhs in three yearly instalments, and some of his territories conquered by the Marathas were restored to him.

Shortly after, Madhav Rao died and the whole Maratha politics was thrown into utter confusion. Hyder Ali took advantage and captured all the territories on which he had set his heart.

To the North

After the Maratha defeat at Panipat, within a short time their influence in Delhi, Doab, and elsewhere in the north ceased to exist. In the early years of his succession, the young Peshwa was also busy in his internal problems and in his hostilities with the Nizam and Hyder Ali. By 1765, however, the Peshwa found himself in a position to try to re-establish the Maratha hold on the north. Towards the close of that year, therefore, Raghunath Rao marched at the head of an army to the north. Mahadji Sindhia and Malhar Holkar joined him. Raghoba realised tribute from Bhopal and besieged Gohad. The siege was raised in December 1766 when the Rana of Gohad agreed to pay him 15 lakh rupees. Just this time the news of Abdali's march into Punjab, once again, reached him and despite the efforts of

Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh and the British to hold him for a joint action against the foreign invader he hurriedly retraced his steps, blaming the Peshwa of having starved him for the lack of provisions.

About five years after Raghoba's march to the north, the Peshwa attempted once again to establish the lost Maratha influence over Delhi and Doab, etc. This time the expedition was sent under Mahadji Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar, who removed Zabita Khan, the son of Najib-ud-Daula from Delhi and re-captured the city. Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor, was at Allahabad under the British protection at this time. He was invited to come back to Delhi and re-occupy his throne. The British tried to prevent the Emperor from parting with them, but the allurements offered by the Marathas proved too strong and the Emperor returned to Delhi, where the Marathas took him under their protection and through him tried also to control the Delhi administration. They were also able to make the Emperor agree to surrender to them the districts of Kora and Allahabad which he had got from the British by the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765, though the timely intervention of the latter prevented this from happening. They also re-captured their territories in the Doab.

Shortly after, in 1772, however, when the Peshwa Madhav Rao died, the two Maratha chiefs were compelled to go back to watch their interests in the contest for power that ensued at Poona, and all that was achieved in the North, was lost once again till Mahadji Sindhia re-established his position at Delhi on a later date.

Relations with the British

It now remains only to review the relations of Madhav Rao with the British. We have seen how in the time of Baji Rao I when the Marathas occupied some coastal lands, the Bombay authorities felt alarmed and fortified their settlement. The defeat of the Marathas at Panipat made the British happy, and they wanted to get an opportunity to secure from the Marathas Salsette and Bassein which had a great naval importance for them. The opportunity seemed to offer itself when after Panipat the Nizam marched on Poona, and the Marathas requested the British for help. But when the British wanted Salsette and Bassein, and full payment of the expenses of war in return, the Maratha request was withdrawn.

During the second campaign of the Carnatic the British were approached for help once again. But nothing came out of it. Shortly after, the Peshwa contacted them once again for an alliance against Hyder Ali, the only thing that the British could do was to assure the Marathas that they would not help any hostile power against them. To this assurance they remained faithful and despite all the efforts of Hyder Ali to woo them against the Marathas, he failed.

During the First Anglo-Mysore war, the British sent a mission to the Court of the Peshwa for help, and for an exchange of Salsette and Bassein against some other territories. But the mission failed, with the result that the British started intriguing with Raghoba and others to get their desires fulfilled. It was because of these contacts with the British that Raghoba, after the death of Madhav Rao, took protection under the British and the First Anglo-Maratha war started.¹

On Wednesday, 18 November 1772, at 8 in the morning the young Peshwa Madhav Rao left this mortal world. It was in 1770 that he began "to feel the approach of the terrible disease which took him away in his youth. He had probably inherited it from his father; but we may surmise that it was hastened by over-work and anxiety. Neither prayer, nor medicine, nor change of place effected any permanent improvement."²

Grant Duff writes : "The death of Madhav Rao occasioned no immediate commotion; like his own disease it was at first scarcely perceptible but the root which invigorated the already scattered and wide-extending tree, was cut off from the stem and the plains of Panipat were not more fatal to the Maratha Empire than the early end of this excellent prince."³

There are few examples in history where a ruler so young could make achievements so great. If he had not been there, and after the death of his father, his uncle Raghunath Rao should have succeeded to power, this intriguing genius, as his later history shows, may only have helped the Maratha power further to decline, and there was every possibility that the Panipat blow should have ultimately brought about the Maratha's political death. It was only Madhav Rao who helped the Maratha nation not only hurriedly to recover from the blow, but also to aspire within a decade of Panipat for achievements greater than those the Marathas had made by 1761.

Young though he was, Madhav Rao had a cool and calculating head of a seasoned and experienced man. The diplomacy by which he could win over his uncle Raghoba when he had no strength to fight, and the way he could crush his power when he had the means to do so later on proved in him a genius who knows when and how to act. The formidable power of the Nizam was crushed, Hyder Ali who was a terror even to the British was effectually humbled, and before he died in 1772, the Marathas were almost there in the

1. For this see chapters on Warren Hastings.
2. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
3. Grant Duff, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-10.

north where they had been before Panipat. What could not have the Marathas achieved if Madhav had continued living just for a few years more ? Destiny was not in favour of the Marathas, the death of Madhav was a greater blow than their defeat of Panipat, and from this blow they could never again recover.

Madhav Rao was not only a great military leader, he also possessed the talent of an efficient administrator which is revealed by his personal interest in every branch of it, judicial, financial or civil. There are instances where he interested himself even in petty theft cases. Strict rules were made for the army on march to protect the standing crops. Prices were controlled, oppressive taxes were abolished, forced labour was completely forbidden and corrupt officers were severely punished. Territorial army and navy, everything received his attention. But his time was short, what he achieved had yet not been consolidated, and he died.

The death of Madhav Rao was a signal for centrifugal forces to come immediately into play. There was a contest for power everywhere for the office of the Peshwa and other lower positions. The whole nation was put on a road to violent decline of power. Later on the three Anglo-Maratha wars¹ took place and the Maratha power completely crashed.

1. Discussed in the following pages.

5

The Maratha Administration

While discussing the Maratha system of administration, a distinction must be made between Svarajya which were the territories within Maharashtra, the Maratha homeland, and Samrajya which were territories outside of it and from which the dual Maratha charge of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* were realised. The distinction between the two is natural for the reasons, first, that Svarajya was directly under the Chhatrapati and the Peshwa. "Secondly, ethnically and culturally, it was more homogeneous than the far-flung dominions. Thirdly, the process of conquest was so prolonged and partial, and the conditions obtaining in the different parts of the country were so varied that harmonious and complete assimilation was not to be expected." The Svarajya territories were more or less those conquered by Shivaji, while Samrajya territories fell under the Maratha control in the time of the supremacy of the Peshwa.

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The Raja

At the head of the whole Maratha Government was the Raja, or Chhatrapati as the Marathas called him, whose headquarters were at Satara and who was the pivot of the whole administration, so long as Shivaji lived. In his later days Shivaji had refused to acknowledge the overlordship of the Mughal Emperor, but his grandson Shahu agreed to pay him an annual tribute and accept from him a Mansab of 10,000. So long as Shahu, the Chhatrapati, however, lived he enjoyed all authority over his Government, appointing and dismissing his ministers and all other officials of the state, but with the passage of time he became slack in practice, leaving more and more in the hands of his Peshwa to do, with the result that after his death the powers of the Chhatrapati slackened so sharply that his authority only became sham and no reality. Though the dresses of honour and appointments continued formally to be secured from him till the end, the Chhatrapati after Shahu was only a prisoner at Satara who had no control even over his domestic servants who

looked to the Peswa for their promotions. His household accounts were likewise under strict scrutiny.

The Peshwa

In the time of Shivaji, the king was assisted by a Council of Eight Ministers, called *Ashta-Pradhan*. Of these eight ministers one was known as the *Mukhya Pradhan*, Peshwa or the Chief Minister; the others being *Mantri*, *Amatya*, *Sumant*, *Sachiv*, *Pandit Rao*, *Nyayadhis* and *Senapati*. To these eight ministers, one more, namely *Pratinidhi*, was added in time of Rajaram; but in the time of Shahu, due to the significant services rendered by one Peshwa after another, and under the peculiar circumstances of his own character and disposition, the Peshwa became all-powerful and the *Ashta-Pradhan* as such ceased to exist. Theoretically, however, the Peshwa was still next only to the Chhatrapati, though in practice, and more particularly after the death of Shahu, he was the supreme authority, occupying a hereditary office like the King and controlling not only all the state affairs, but even the Chhatrapati's household. The Peshwa's position was like that of the eldest son in a Hindu joint-family where the father who has now become an old man, continues still to live, but the real head of the family is the son at whose mercy he is and at whose hands he often suffers disrespect and even maltreatment. Peshwa lived at Poona, and for all practical purposes this was the headquarter of the Maratha Government, not Satara which was the headquarter only of the Chhatrapati.

The Hazur Daftar

Hazur Daftar was the imperial secretariat at Poona where about two hundred persons worked, and where all records of money payments and receipts were kept. The Maratha archives which, as a result of this developed, was huge, and the Maratha records, many of which are still available, are authentic documents of inestimable value which help us to reconstruct an account of the working of the Maratha Government and its peculiarities.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Confederacy

Under the Central Government were the confederate¹ chiefs like Sindhia, Holkar, Gaikwad and Bhonsle. Shivaji never granted jagirs, *saranjams* or estates on hereditary basis. But in the time of Shahu when the Maratha military leaders were assigned different territories over which to establish the Maratha sway in return for certain payments to the Central Government, these military chiefs carried the Maratha arms far and wide and won laurels as far as

1. For further details of the Maratha Confederacy see the chapters on Lord Cornwallis.

Attock and Peshawar on the north-west of India realising tributes from Bengal, Bihar and other far-flung territories. Since they developed their authority by their own initiative and not due to any grants of territories actually under the control of the Chhatrapati, they started asserting their independence; more particularly when the Peshwa usurped the powers of the Chhatrapati, and yet more so when the Peshwa's powers themselves fell under the control of his chief minister Nana Phadnis. These chiefs often joined together against a common foe, but internally they became independent owing only a common allegiance to the Maratha crown. Together they constituted what was known as the Maratha Confederacy, though there was no constitutional basis for it, and it depended more on usage and convenience than law. The territories held by these chiefs were the Samrajya territories in the beginning, but later on many of them directly annexed by these chiefs became their respective principalities. Their internal administration therefore varied from prince to prince.

Svarajya Territories

The territories directly held by the Peshwa were divided into Sarkars, also known as the Prants or provinces which were under a Governor known as Mamalatdar who was the highest judicial, administrative and financial authority of his part of the Maratha kingdom. His office was very lucrative and was often, it is said, auctioned. There were, however, certain checks on his authority. Under him, thus, were eight hereditary Darakhedars whose services were directly controlled by the centre and who worked jointly, independently, with and sometimes against the Governor when he indulged into irregularities and his conduct was reported. Besides, the accounts rendered by him to the Hazur Daftar were not passed till they were verified with those secured from Deshpandes and Deshmukhs.

Each Sarkar was divided into a number of Parganas each of which was under a Kama-visdar who, like Mamalatdar, was executive, financial and judicial head of the territories under his jurisdiction and was controlled by the Mamalatdar from above. A Pargana was further divided into Mahals or Tarafs each of which was under a Havaladar who was assisted by a Mazumdar or an accounts officer, and a Mahal Fadnis who was an auditor. Four militia officers, Asham Dafdardar, Asham Fadnis, Hashamnavis and Hazirnavis helped him to maintain law and order in his area.

“At the bottom of the Maratha political system was the village community (Panchayat). This has indeed been always the case with the whole of India. The universal prevalence of this element at all times in our country has saved and preserved our civilization and culture despite the vicissitudes of our political history.” “These communities contain, in miniature, all the material of a State within

themselves and are almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other governments were withdrawn."¹

Each village was a self-contained unit headed by a hereditary officer known as Patel who was directly responsible to the Peshwa through the latter's officer known as Karbhari. Patel was the executive, revenue and judicial head of the village community. Twelve persons representing different professions in the village such as iron-smiths and goldsmith's advised him in his administration; the association of the twelve being known as Bara Baluth. Besides, the Patel was assisted by other karkuns like Kulkarni, Chaugula etc., who helped him in the collection of land revenue and other sundry works. The Patel represented his village before the higher local officers, and before the Central Government when required.

A town was headed by a Kotwal who also enjoyed all police, judicial and administrative authority over the townsmen. He also had several karkuns to help him, as also to spy over his activities and report his irregularities to the concerned authorities.

A word about the Maratha police which is said to be extremely efficient. It could be compared with advantage to the contemporary London Police, and was sought later on to be absorbed in the British Police system established by the Bombay Presidency. In every village the Patel maintained law and order with the help of a police officer named Mahar. Village chowkidar or watchman was an important person who helped in apprehending criminals and putting them to trial, and this rural police was appreciated by the British and sought to be maintained at all costs. The district police was under the Mamlatdar, while in a town a Kotwal handled the police duties under strict rules and discipline from the exacting character of which even the Peshwa Baji Rao II could not escape. It is, for instance, said that at Poona there was a strict rule that nobody could remain outside in the streets after ten in the night without running the risk of being arrested and detained for the whole night. The Peshwa violated the rule and had to suffer detention like a common man. Besides the local regular police, on occasions such as fairs and festivals, and at pilgrimage places, special police guards used to be posted to help meet exigencies of the time.

THE REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

The most important source of income in the Swarajya dominions of the Marathas, as elsewhere in India, was the Land Revenue. For the purpose of assessment, it is said, the land of the country was divided on the basis of three principles; first the quality of land, whether it was good, bad or mediocre; second, the availability of the

1. See Sharma, S R., *The Founding of the Maratha Freedom*, Bombay, 1964 p. 417.

irrigational facilities, and third, the particular type of crop raised. It was then correctly measured and the rate fixed according to the quality and other principles above enumerated. The best land, it is said, paid as much as two-fifths of its produce as land revenue. In the time of Peshwa Madhav Rao I thus, the "rent charged for each *bigha* of first class land was Rs. 5, for second class land Rs. 4, and for third class land Rs. 3. Revenue might be paid in cash or kind... Sometimes *parganas* were farmed and a portion of the revenue was realised in advance from the officers, who however, received interest on the sum so advanced."¹

For the system of the collection of land revenue, we may best quote Dr. S.N. Sen : "When the time for collection came, the Mahar called the rent-payers to the village *chawdi* where the Patil held his office. The Kulkarni or the village account-keeper was present there with his records to assist the Patil in his work, and so were Potdars. The latter assayed and stamped the money when paid, for which the rent-payer got a receipt from the Kulkarni. When the collection was over, the money was sent to the Kamavisdar with a letter under the charge of the Chaugula, and a similar letter, often a duplicate copy, was sent to the Deshmukh, under the charge of the Mahar. The Chaugula got a receipt from the Mamlatdar for the sum paid, which was carefully preserved in the Kulkarni's bundle of village accounts. Sometimes a *Shibandi* was sent by the officer in charge of the district or *Tarf* to help the Patil in his work of collection. The revenue was generally paid in four instalments and sometimes in three."²

The Government constructed dams and canals for the purpose of irrigation. Private persons were also encouraged to erect dams ; it was the practice to grant ten *bighas* in *inam* to any person who erected a dam and turned 100 *bighas* into garden land."³ Loans called "Tagai" were advanced to improve upon the agriculture and in times of famine etc., the revenue collections were also partially or wholly remitted. The loans were recovered in easy instalments, and due care was taken that revenue farmers and collectors etc., did not oppress the cultivators. The erring officials were duly punished, and there were strict instructions not to damage crops when troops marched. Where peasants suffered on this account, they were duly compensated. Every encouragement was given to reclaim the waste and fallow lands.

The system of revenue management under Balaji Bajirao, Madhavrao and Nana Phadnavis was, on the whole, careful. The land settlements made by the Peshwas during this period show that

1. Banerjee, A.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 184-85.

2. Sen, Dr. S.N., *Administrative System of the Marathas* Calcutta, 1925, p. 225.

3. Banerjee, A.C., *op. cit.*, p. 185.

while anxious not to oppress the ryots, every care was taken to insist on the rights of the Government...The general impression, left on one's mind by the study of the revenue portion of the record...is on the whole very favourable..."¹

Of the other sources of revenue, one was the customs duty on trade and sale of goods, and the octroi and ferry charges, etc., the former known as *Mahatarfa* and the latter as *Zakat*. Brahmins could import goods for their personal use, free of duty. The judicial proceeds constituted another source of income. "A *nazar* was often realised from the successful party in dispute. Fees (amounting to one-fourth, one-sixth or one-tenth of the sum) were taken for partitioning family property, for recovering stolen goods from thieves. Some portions of the property left by a person dying without issue were confiscated by the Government, the remainder being left to his mother and widow."²

Permits were sold out to cut wood from the forests which constituted yet another source of income. Licences were issued to private mint-holders for minting coins of standard value and quality. People paid professional taxes which varied from profession to profession. Monopolies were given for the manufacture of drugs etc. And there were a large number of miscellaneous charges such as succession duty, house-tax, pasturate fee, etc.

Another important source of income, however, was the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the Samrajya territories, and these two sources of revenue make an interesting study. *Sardeshmukhi* was a charge equal to one-tenth of the land-revenue which a hereditary *Deshmukh*, in the time of the Mughals, kept to himself in return for the collection of the revenue and the maintenance of law and order in a territory allotted to him. *Chauth* was a charge under which a state or a territory paid twenty-five per cent of its land revenue to the Marathas in return for protection against a foreign aggression. The latter can be well compared to the Subsidiary System of alliances which later on Lord Wellesley adopted in India, and under which one state after another either virtually fell under the British control, or was directly annexed as the time passed.

We are tempted in this connection to quote Justice Ranade. "The story of the transference of power from the old Mahomedan rulers to the hands of the Maratha confederacy presents features, the like of which were seldom witnessed in the past history of India, and resembled faithfully the history of the success achieved by the great Marquess of Wellesley in the early years of this century, when he organised the system of subsidiary alliances, as they were called, with the native powers which secured to the British Company its

1. Ranade & Telang, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

2. See Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

sovereignty over the continent of India. This idea of subsidiary alliances was, in fact, a reproduction on a more organised scale of the plan followed by the Maratha leaders a hundred years in advance, when they secured the grant of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the Imperial authorities at Delhi."¹

Both *sardeshmukhi* and *chauth* rights were claimed by Shivaji first in 1650 when he requested the Mughal Emperor to accept the farmer's right on certain lands which, however, were not granted. In 1668 Shivaji, on his own, made the Golconda and Bijapur rulers to pay him both *sardeshmukhi* and *chauth* against which he undertook the responsibility of protecting them. In 1671 these two charges were levied on Khandesh; in 1674 on the Portuguese possessions in the Konkan; in 1675 on Carnatic, and in 1680 on some other Mughal provinces of the Deccan.

In 1705, Aurangzeb himself was made to grant to the Marathas the *sardeshmukhi* rights on the six provinces of the Deccan, which, however, only whetted the Maratha appetite, and in 1709 Shahu made the Mughal Governor of the Deccan agree to pay *chauth* in return for the Maratha protection against foreign aggressions. When Nizam-ul-Mulk became the Viceroy of the Deccan in 1713, he repudiated the above agreement of his predecessor, with the result that the Marathas had to fight against him. Later on when Sayyad Hussain Ali became the Viceroy of the Deccan, he agreed once again to pay to the Marathas the *daul* charges in return for which the Marathas agreed to pay to the Mughal Emperor a *peshkash* of ten lakh rupees, and maintain 15,000 horses for the Emperor's service to be placed at the Viceroy disposal. Balaji Vishwanath marched to Delhi with the Sayyad Viceroy to get the treaty ratified by the Mughal Emperor, Farrukh Siyar. The latter, however, refused to do so, with the result that he was removed from his throne and put to death. His successor Mohammad Shah ratified the treaty immediately on his coming to power in 1719.

The Deccan provinces over which the *sardeshmukhi* and *chauth* rights were established by the Marathas in 1719, were Khandesh, Berar, Bijapur, Hyderabad, Aurangabad and Bedar, and we have already seen how the ambitious Nizam of Hyderabad could never reconcile to such humiliating terms, and the Marathas continued to fight against him, occasionally realising the payments and arrears till the the Maratha confederates joined together for the last time in 1795 when they defeated him at the battle of Kharda, whereafter the Nizam fell under the British protection and was thus saved of the Maratha depredations forever.

Besides the six provinces of the Deccan, the Maratha confederate chiefs in the time of Baji Rao I, Balaji Baji Rao and Madhav Rao, as we have already seen, secured similar rights on other parts

1. Ranade, Mahadeo Govind, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, Bombay, 1961, p. 97.

of India, and carried their arms as far as Attock and Peshawar. They levied *sardeshmukhi* and *chauth* on the Doab, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, Gujarat, Kathiawar, Malwa, Bundelkhand, Rajputana and Delhi also could not escape.

It must be remembered that these levies were not always accepted by the local chiefs, and often even when the grants were made by the Imperial authorities at Delhi, they resisted, till the Marathas enforced their claims with the sword.

Like the Subsidiary System of Wellesley, *Chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* often were the only charges that could be collected from the states, and they were heavy, after the payment of which not much was left for the local administration. In these circumstances the administration of a protected state often deteriorated, leading ultimately to its annexation by the Marathas.

THE JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

There was no written law nor a code of procedure, though the ancient works of Manu and Yajnavalkya were often looked to for guidance. Justice was usually based on local customs tampered with the individual whims of a judge whom it was not always difficult to mollify with gold.

The king was supposed to be the fountain-head of justice, though his powers after Shahu actually devolved on the Peshwa who for all practical purposes, became the supreme court of justice in the Maratha country. The Peshwa was assisted by the Nyayadhis, and Rama Shastri who occupied this post in the time of Madhav Rao I was a well-known judicial authority who introduced many reforms in the judicial structure of the country. In their respective jagirs the feudal lords enjoyed almost the final judicial powers, though sometimes the cases were also sent up to the Peshwa where a feudal chief was under his effective authority. All these courts were original as well as appellate.

"In keeping with the traditions of the country, the Peshwa went out on tours of investigation, heard complaints and awarded punishments. Broughton was struck with the ease with which Daulatrao Shinde could be approached, by the seekers of justice even while he was out on an expedition. The great Rama Shastri heard complaints and witnesses even at home, but his integrity was never impugned."¹ "Sometimes he consulted a common friend of the disputants; but on the whole he conducted the business with an attitude of strict justice."² It may be interesting to note that in one case a

1. Sharma S.R., *op. cit*, p. 426.

2. Sen, *op. cit*, p. 370.

litigant "did not hesitate to accuse Rama Shastri of partiality; the Peshwa directed another judge to hear his case."¹

Below these were the courts of Mamlatdars, Kamavisdai and Panchayats. Kotwals exercised judicial powers in the towns, and arbitrators were often appointed by Mamlatdars on whose opinions they based their decisions.

The Panchayats in the villages had their own sanctity, for Panch (literally five) represented Parmeshwar (God), and from Peshwa to the lowest official all gave due credence to the verdicts given by them.

Punishments, generally, were mild. In criminal cases sometimes a capital punishment was given, in which a criminal was hanged, cut to pieces or decapitated. Sometimes the skull of a criminal was crushed under the strokes of a mallet, though a Brahmin under capital punishment could only be poisoned or starved to death. Instances of mutilation are also known, where hands or feet of the males and nose, breasts or ears of female offenders were chopped off. If a wife committed suicide, her husband had to suffer a fine. Trials by ordeal were known, properties were confiscated, criminals were imprisoned in the forts and flogging was also done.

In civil cases the punishments were mild, and fines and imprisonment usually served the purpose. In political offences, however, the punishments were severe. A.C. Banerjee says : "Some persons had tried to release Tulaji Angria (a political offender); their houses and lands were attached, and their families imprisoned. The same punishment was inflicted on the family of a man who had assisted Tulaji's son in escaping from the fort of Visapur . . . In the case of some political prisoners, their irons were not removed except at dinner time: but an exception was made in the case of women."²

Justice, as we have already seen, was a good source of income to the state, and even severe cases were sometimes let off with money-payment. Both winning and losing parties had to pay, the former in the shape of a *nazarana*, the latter in the shape of *jurmana*. A fee also had to be paid on the stolen goods when recovered.

MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

Cavalry

Main part of the Marathas army consisted of cavalry which was divided into two : (1) the Bargirs who were supplied horses and other war material by the state, and (2) the Shiledars who brought

1. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, pp.189-90.

2. Banerjee *op. cit.*, p. 190

their own horses and the war material. Both were under the control of Sar-i-Naubat, the Commander-in-Chief. The basic unit of the cavalry organisation consisted of 25 Bargirs headed by a Havaldar. Over every five Havaldars there was a Jamadar, over ten Jamadars a Yak-hazari. Punch-hazari or 5-hazari was the highest rank in the cavalry next to its Sar-i-Naubat.

Cavalry was the important branch of the Maratha army like the Mughals before them. But its main defect was its Shiledars who would never easily like to get their horses killed in a battle-field, for the death of the horse of a Shiledar would mean his ruin and an ultimate incapacitation from which it was not always easy to recover.

Infantry

The Marathas maintained an infantry but this service was inferior, and proved to be one of the causes of their defeat before the British. Paek was the name of an infantry soldier, nine Paeks under a Nayak constituted a unit, fifty Nayaks were placed under a Havaldar five Havaldars under a Jamadar. Above them there was a Hazari; the seven-Hazari being the highest rank next to the Sar-i-Naubat.

Salaries were paid in cash, a Jamadar receiving between 100 and 125 hons¹ a year, a hazari getting 1000 hons and a panch-hazari maximum of 2000 hons.

Artillery

The Marathas also maintained an artillery, but this branch of service depended entirely for its operation as well as supplies on the foreigners like the French.

Forts

They built forts, which offered them refuge in the face of invasions, and helped them store up military supplies, food and fodder. There were three types of forts they constructed. (1) Garh, which was built on the top of a mountain (2) Kot, which was built in the plains; and (3) Durg, that was built on the sea coast. Each fort had a piece of land attached to it, and was administered by three officers of equal rank, i.e., a Sabnis in charge of the stores; a Havaldar, in charge of the keys, and a Subedar who handled the civil and revenue affairs connected with the fort.

Navy

The Marathas also gave due importance to the navy. Shivaji had achieved a remarkable success in its organisation within a short time, and in the time of the Peshwas also an effort was made at its

1 A gold coin equal to $3\frac{1}{2}$ masas in weight.

development, for the purposes of defence and commerce. Each fleet was under the charge of a Darya-sarang who was a Muslim, and a Mainaik who was a Hindu. They had several ports to which they added by capturing Bassein from the Portuguese. They had a large number of ships, at least more than 700, and they traded far and wide, visiting China and the Arabian coast where some of the Maratha traders actually settled down. "Shivaji's victory over the English in the severely fought action at 'Hari-Kenri' off the island of Bombay in January 1680, was his greatest triumph. That reputation was sustained by Kanhoji Angre ('Shivaji of the seas'), until it was undermined by the Peshwas in combination with the English."¹

The Marathas maintained strict discipline in their army and naval services. "The belongings", for instance, "of every trooper were carefully enumerated at the commencement of an expedition and again at the end of it. The difference comprising the booty was to be handed over to the state treasury ; not a needle or a pie was allowed to be retained by the soldier. The accounts of military income and disbursements were prepared and submitted over the signatures of four officers : the *huzari*, *mujumdar*, *karbhari* and *jam-navis*."²

Generally reviewing, the Maratha system of administration was drawn both from the ancient Hindu beliefs and the current Mughal practices, and suffered from the natural weakness of a people who starting with an aim of establishing a *Hindu Pad Padshahi* degenerated into petty local powers each fighting for its own gain. The Maratha people have been condemned as plunderers in which they made no distinction of caste, creed or a religion. Busy all the time in self-aggrandizement, they had no time for the development of education or other arts of peace. The worst evil they suffered from was the principle of heredity which coming down from the king, permeated every rank and office in civil and the military departments. Little was done for the economic regeneration of the country, and mutual jealousies of the chiefs robbed the people of moral precepts with which to inspire themselves. The army, originally entirely national, now included Pathans, Arabs, Europeans and others none of whom were reliable. Downfall of the Marathas who lacked discipline in every sphere of activity, was a natural course of their history when the British appeared before them

Before closing the account, however, it must be pointed out that most of the administrative defects and the predatory habits from which the Marathas suffered, are applicable more to their Samrajya territories than to their Svarajya possessions. There is much in their Swarajya management, as we have already seen, which would elicit an appreciation even from the greatest of cynics.

1. Sharma *op.*, *cit* , p. 422

2. *ibid*, p. 42.

CAUSES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARATHA POWER

The Maratha power originated with Shivaji the Great, and developed into an Empire in the first half of the eighteenth century, till it received a setback at Panipat in 1761 from which it took about a decade to recover, but once again to be suppressed and scattered by the British into petty principalities which remained in 1818 and thereafter. To trace the origin of this power here is outside of our purview, but its development from the coming to power of Shahu to the death of Madhav Rao I has been already reviewed. The three Anglo-Maratha wars and its subsequent decline will be a subject of our subsequent discussions, but it will be a fitting end to our discussions so far to say a few words regarding the factors that led to the development of this power.

The first factor may be said to be the peculiar country to which they belonged, and its geographical and physical features which facilitated for the Marathas to invite a trouble with the ruling powers and to defend themselves. "The Maratha race occupies the country lying between the Indian ocean and the river Wardha. Their northern boundary is the Satpura Range and they extend to Goa on the West Coast. Their strength lies in the inaccessible barriers of the Western Ghats which climb precipitously to the great plateau that extends eastward with a gradual slope far beyond the Maratha limits to the Bay of Bengal."¹ The Marathas are thus provided with a natural defensive system from behind which they could easily operate and fight against an enemy.

The character of the Maratha race, also has something to do with the rise and development of their power. Enclosed on two sides by the great mountain ranges—the Sahyadri range running from north to south, and the Satpura and the Vindhya ranges running from east to west—"the tableland of Maharashtra has been inhabited by a population in which the *Aryans* and the *Dravidians* have been mixed in due proportion, so as to retain the good points of both without exaggerating their defects."² Self-contained and isolated, not having much intercourse with the outside world, the Marathas retained an innate love of independence which helped them to resist slavery and develop a political power of their own.

The popular religion of the Marathas "has avoided the extremes of sectarianism which disfigure and disunite the *Dravidian* portion of the peninsula, and the minute sub-divisions of caste which obtains in North India" thus writes Ranade. "If not blended together, they

1. Nandkarni, *op. cit.* p. 271.

2. Ranade, M.G. and Telang, K.T. *Rise of the Maratha Power and other Essays and Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles*, Bombay, 1961, pp. 10-12.

show tolerance of a sort amounting almost to indifference, which is characteristic of their country."¹ This no doubt, also must have helped the Marathas to assert their independence, by giving them at least a semblance of religious unity.

The Marathas, had since long served the Deccan kingdoms of Golkonda and Bijapur etc. as military officers as well as diplomats, and this training and the guerrilla tactics of Malik Amber were in their blood which inspired them to fight with confidence and to rule.

When there was a decay in the Deccan Sultanates as a result of the internal dissensions and effeminate character which developed out of ease and affluence which had become the life-blood of their existence, the Marathas got an opportunity to rise; yet more so when these kingdoms later on were destroyed by Aurangzeb, and none was left in the Maratha neighbourhood to be afraid of.

Then the religious reform movement which originated in the south and soon enveloped the whole Indian peninsula in the form of Bhakti cult that arose as a reaction to the proselytizing zeal of Islam, also exercised a considerable influence over the Marathas. It was this movement which gave birth to the Sikh religion in the Punjab that gave a death blow to the Mughal rule in that part of the country and rolled the flood of the Afghan invasions across the Indus. Like Nanak in the Punjab, there were saints and prophets in Maharashtra, such as Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram who preached the philosophy of love and independence of soul. They preached the oneness of all mankind and the unity of Godhood in which there was no one small and no one great, and in which, therefore, there was no place for political slavery.

Nor may one overlook the economic factor which compelled the people of Maharashtra to break their political shackles and aspire for food, clothing and shelter with honour. From Allauddin Khilji to the time of Shivaji the people had suffered from heavy taxation, forced labour and other such economic burdens. Mughal invasions destroyed stability making peaceful professions difficult and economic misery of the people became acute. "The chief cause of unrest in India is usually economic", writes Rawlinson, "and it was Shivaji's economic reforms which chiefly recommended him to the people."² The Maratha *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* which threw the burden of taxation on the neighbouring powers and eased the pressure of taxation on the Maratha people themselves was bound to win for the Maratha leaders the loyalty of the men who fought under them.

Aurangzeb's bigotry and his thoughtless policy towards the Muslim kingdoms of Golkonda and Bijapur also led to the origin and development of the Maratha power. His bigotry lay in his attitude

1. *ibid.*, p. 13.

2. Rawlinson, H.G., *Shivaji the Maratha*, p. 95

towards the non-Muslims exhibited in their forcible conversion to Islam, and in his imposition on them of the special charges like poll-tax and *jazia*. This made the Marathas resist the Mughal authority and fight for their independence. In this they were helped by the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan, who in their bid to save themselves from destruction at the hands of the Mughals tried to appease the Marathas to win them over to their own cause.

Then, the causes of the rise and development of the Maratha power lay in the causes of the downfall of the Mughals. Aurangzeb was succeeded by weak and effeminate rulers who preferred to spend their time under the degrading charm of a harem than in the battlefield. Constant warfare of Aurangzeb left behind a society which chafed under the ever-increasing economic burden. Magic spell of the religious zeal over the army had broken. It now was a mixture of mercenaries drawn from different races and nationalities no more animated by a common aspiration. The ceaseless warfare and hardships had demoralized it, and it exhibited the signs of tiredness and decay.

Opposed to this was the Maratha society, resurgent and steeped with the ideas of youthful exploits. The personal character and the qualities of a general, organiser and administrator that Shivaji possessed; and a chain of very able, young and energetic Peshwas from the time of Shahu to the death of Madhav Rao I who carried the Maratha arms outside the limits of Maharashtra, and as far as Attock and Peshawar in the north-west, and Delhi and Bengal in the north and the north-east; all this in no small measure contributed to the growth of this power. Nor did the peculiar war methods adopted by the Marathas at the early stages play an insignificant role in the matter. Their guerrilla ways suited their situation and circumstances. Attacking the rear and raising the enemy out of its spirits by hovering around its camp but still avoiding a pitched battle, all this amply helped the Marathas to gain what they wanted to have.

Coming of the Europeans in India

THE PORTUGUESE

Throughout the middle ages, the Indian wares had remained in great demand in the markets of Europe, and the profits on them, according to Whiteway, were so enormous as "to bear the cost of passage through so many jurisdictions and the expense of so many transshipments." Thus, in addition to the large expense on the double journey, the goods going to Europe through Jedda had to make payments to the Sultan of Cairo to the extent of one-third of their value. From Jedda to Suez another payment at 5 per cent *ad valorem* was due. A mile out of Cairo one more heavy impost was levied. At Alexandria both the buyer and the seller paid 5 per cent *ad valorem* each, and this in addition to another 5 per cent that the shipper paid "to frank him across the sea."¹

All this necessitated the discovery of some new and direct route to India and of the European nations, it was only the Spaniards and the Portuguese who were at this time in the field for trading with the East, and of these two it was the Portuguese who made a mark by establishing a strong foothold in the coastal Africa and by crossing the Equator in 1471. Their greatest victory, however, was yet to come in 1498, when on 17 May, Vasco da Gama anchored off an Indian village which lay about eight miles north of Calicut. It was not the first visit of a Portuguese to India, but by sailing round the Cape of Good Hope on to Mozambique and thence to Calicut, Vasco da Gama had discovered a new and a direct sea-route to India which had a pronounced and immediate "effect on the history of Europe". Sir E. Denison Ross writes: "perhaps no event during the middle ages had such far-reaching repercussion on the civilised world as the opening of the sea-route to India."

1. Whiteway, *Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, pp. 7-8, quoted in *Cambridge History of India*, V.
2. See *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 6-8.

As a result of the new discovery, the Indian luxuries could now be brought direct to Portugal instead of conveying them through many jurisdictions. This paralysed the Muslim rulers through whose territories the trade previously passed. Genoa and Venice which had greatly prospered, were also badly affected. The Muslim traders who monopolised their trade-control over the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea found all initiative having escaped their hands. And Portugal suddenly rose both in name and wealth. the Pope Alexander VI conferring on the Portuguese king the title of "Lord of the Navigation, Conquest and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India" in 1502.

When Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut, the territory was being ruled by a Hindu monarch who enjoyed the hereditary title of Zamorin. Besides, Cochín, Kannamur and Vijayanagar were also held by the Hindu rulers; while the Muslims held sway over Delhi, Berar, Bidar, Gujarat, Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. Since the discovery of the direct sea-route to India was a direct challenge to the Muslim traders who monopolised the control over the sea-borne trade with this country, it was significant that Vasco da Gama landed only in a Hindu territory.

When da Gama had set sail from Lisbon, he had with him three vessels and the company of 170 men. This expedition had been fitted out under the patronage of King Emmanuel of Portugal purposely with a view to finding out some direct sea-route to India where the Portuguese wanted to find spices and Christians, but the Portuguese never seem to have had a very sharp mind and a diplomatic genius. For although Zamorin received them well, they brought no presents with them to woo the Indian rulers. And they also suffered from a great misconception that whosoever was not Muslim, must be a Christian. That is perhaps why, although Vasco da Gama remained in a Hindu territory for over three months, he could never discover that the people in whose midst he lived, were Hindus. His apathy and ignorance were in fact so palpable as to make him enter a Hindu temple and pray there because he considered it to be a Christian chapel. Nor was his behaviour very cordial towards the inhabitants of this country whose sympathies and good wishes it was necessary for him to cultivate so as to wean them away from their contact with the Muslim traders. For when he left on his return voyage on 29 August 1498 he carried away with him five of them as prisoners merely for the crime that they had delayed the release of the goods he was carrying back home. Yet the expedition of da Gama was a success. When he reached home after a two-year absence, he had with him fifty-five men still alive, and out of the original three ships he had two which were fully loaded with the specimens of the wares that were obtainable in Calicut. Besides he could enlighten the Portuguese merchants with regard to their goods which could find a market amongst the people of Zamorin.

Encouraged by da Gama's success, the Portuguese now sent a larger fleet with 1,200 men and 13 vessels under the command of Pedro Alvarez Cabral who landed in Calicut on 13 September 1500. Cabral was also received well by Zamorin, but he was yet less trained in diplomacy than da Gama with the result that within a short time he spoiled his relations with the ruler and had to flee to Cochin from where, pursued by a fleet from Calicut, he stole back to Portugal. Cabral's mission was also, however, a success in the sense that he was able to take back to his country five ships fully loaded with Indian wares which more than met the whole expense incurred on the expedition.

In 1501 four more Portuguese trading ships appeared off Cochin and went back home successfully. And on 29 October 1502 da Gama reached Calicut for the second time with a fleet of 20 vessels. By the time da Gama paid his second visit, the Portuguese had learnt that they could benefit from an enormous trade with India only if their rivals, the Arabs, were driven away from it. They learnt that there was a possibility of the Hindu rulers preferring them to the Arabs for the latter were Muslims and the Europeans were able to introduce several new commodities in the Indian markets; that the Hindus were not Christians but a different religion which was not always on good terms with the Muslim rulers of India who sympathised with the Arabs; that Cochin as an harbour was better than Calicut and that the rulers of the two places, though both Hindus were not on good terms with each other—a fact which could well be exploited by the Europeans. Thus, the chances of the success of the Portuguese were bright provided they could proceed with moderation and diplomacy. Da Gama, however, as we have already seen, was not quite suited for the job, and during his second visit his behaviour towards his opponents was yet more barbaric and atrocious, and towards his friends yet less soothing and appealing. Little wonder, therefore, his success could not be as pronounced as possible. Yet before he went back to Lisbon, he had established a factory in Cochin and a defensive palisade in Kannanur.

After this the Portuguese abandoned the policy of sending yearly expeditions and in 1505 appointed a Viceroy instead, who would remain at his post in India for three years. The first man to occupy this office was Francisco d'Almeida who was known for his 'blue water' policy for the reason that instead of adding to the number of the Portuguese settlements in India, he preferred to strengthen his naval power. Success attended his ventures so much so that a fleet of Zamorin was destroyed; a fleet of the Sultan of Egypt sent to drive away the Portuguese was defeated off Diu; the Hindu Raja of Cochin became a puppet in the hands of the Portuguese and the latter were able to build small fortresses at Cochin, Kannanur and Anjadiva—a number of islets close to the Malabar coast. Almeida was succeeded by Albuquerque in 1509.

Albuquerque (1509-15)

Albuquerque who came to India as Governor of the Portuguese territories in this country on 5 November 1509, was the greatest Portuguese conqueror and administrator ever to be sent for the job.

The most important of the achievements of Albuquerque was his conquest of Goa which he wrested from the hands of Yusuf Adil Khan, the ruler of Bijapur, on 4 March 1510. Shortly after this, however, the Bijapur ruler re-established his authority over the territory and Albuquerque had to retire to Anjadiva. But the Bijapur ruler's success was only short-lived and towards the close of November the Portuguese were able to recover it for themselves. To strengthen the defences of Goa, Albuquerque had one more achievement to his credit in 1512 when he gallantly marched and occupied the fort of Banasterim which lay about six miles from Goa and which had been strongly garrisoned by the Bijapur ruler. Goa was thus fully secured in the Portuguese hands and Albuquerque converted it into the Portuguese headquarters. In his effort to increase its commercial importance, all the ships sailing in the neighbourhood were compelled to visit the port. People from outside, Hindus and even Muslim traders were encouraged to settle down in Goa, he gave every inducement to the Europeans to take for themselves Indian wives and also attempted at certain reforms in the Hindu social customs such as the sati system.¹

Another great achievement of Albuquerque was his conquest of Malacca in the Far East in 1511. This place, held by the Moors, commanded the trade-route between India and China and played a significant role in the prosperity of Mecca and Cairo. Its occupation by the Portuguese also made Venice depend entirely on them for the future supply of the commodities it received from the Muslim traders. No wonder, therefore, when the news regarding its occupation was conveyed to the Pope, he celebrated the Portuguese success by holding a series of public thanksgiving ceremonies.

Besides, Albuquerque knew that the full hold of the Portuguese over the Indian trade could be established only if the danger of reprisal of the Muslim traders was removed at its very source in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. He therefore attacked Aden in 1513, but unfortunately failed in establishing his hold over it. Ormuz, a Persian island in the Persian Gulf, however passed under the Portuguese control in 1515 and Albuquerque felt himself so strong as even to reject a proposal of Ismail Safavi of Persia for a diplomatic relationship with him which could have prevented him from occupying this island.

1. Gupta, A. D. *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 9-10. Also see Danvers, F. C. *The Portuguese in India*, London, 1894, 2 vols..

Albuquerque died on 16 December 1515 at Goa, a hero among the Portuguese, a selfless patriot and a loyal servant of his master the King of Portugal, who can well be termed as the founder of the Portuguese Empire in India. He was both foresighted and a far-sighted man who instead of merely strengthening his naval power like Almeida, felt the need also of directly occupying the places which commanded the trade routes or which could be a source of danger to it. "He realised," writes Sir E. D. Ross, that "the three keys to the eastern trade were Malacca, Ormuz and Aden. He obtained complete control of the first two, and almost secured the third."¹ If he could not capture a place he wanted to he would try to build a fort there as he did at Cochim, and when he could not do even this, he would try to induce the merchants of the place to recognize the supremacy of the Portuguese king. His encouragement to the Portuguese to marry the Indian ladies was aimed at establishing the Portuguese colonies on the Indian territories, and in this he was quite successful.

Had Albuquerque lived a little longer, he should definitely have occupied Aden as well. Yet his services to the Portuguese nation were not insignificant. From Ormuz to Malacca, he established a system of naval base which not only commanded all the seaborne trade, but also kept all the foreign vessels at the Portuguese mercy. And he was loved and respected for all this and not by the Portuguese alone. Even the Indians admired him for his character and integrity though for the Arabs and the Egyptians who were replaced by the Portuguese in the trade, he was only a traitor, a monster who cared for no scruples while dealing with his enemies. He wrote to the King of Portugal: "I leave no town or building of the Mussalmans. Those who are taken alive, I order them to be roasted . . .

Nino da Cunha

After Albuquerque, the next important Portuguese Governor of their territories in India was Nino da Cunha who took charge of his office in November 1529. It was he who by taking advantage of the clashes between Humayun the Mughal ruler of India and Sultan Bahadur the ruler of Gujarat, by diplomacy and by force occupied both Bassein in 1534 and Diu in 1537. The Portuguese were able to wrest the port of Daman from the hands of Imad-ul Mulk an important noble of Gujarat who enjoyed a considerable hold over the king of that place in 1559. In the meanwhile in 1518 they had also been able to build for themselves a fort at Colombo, and by the middle of the sixteenth century their hold over the whole of Ceylon was complete.

Antonio de Noronha :

Another Portuguese Governor whose name may be mentioned

1. Cambridge, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8.

here was Antonio de Noronha who occupied this office in September 1571. It was during his time in 1572 that after receiving the submission of Sultan Muzaffar, the king of Gujarat at Ahmedabad Akbar visited Cambay where he made his first acquaintance of the Portuguese. The contacts between the Portuguese and the Mughal Emperor thereafter developed resulting into the first Jesuit Mission being received in the Mughal court in 1580.

The rise of the Portuguese power in India, however, could not continue for long. In 1580, Philip II of Spain, after giving a crushing defeat to the Portuguese at Alcantara, annexed Portugal to his own kingdom, and immediately thereafter, a rot in the Portuguese power in the East commenced. The Dutch who were supplanted by the English, took away one Portuguese possession after another. They lost Amboyna to the Dutch. The latter occupied Malacca in 1640 while Ormuz was occupied by Iran in 1622 and Bassein by the Marathas in 1739. In 1656 the Portuguese were turned out of Ceylon. And the only territories they finally retained and which they continued to occupy till the very recent time were Goa, Daman and Diu.

Effects of the Portuguese rule

The most important effect of the Portuguese rule on parts of the Indian territories was that they introduced a new political element in the already existing mass of political powers that existed at the time. This new element, the Europeans, steadily developed its influence. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and then by the French, and they were all, in time, supplanted by the British who steadily expanded their power in India and ultimately converted the whole of this land into the British Empire. Had the Portuguese failed to frustrate the repeated Turkish attempts to dislodge them from India, there is absolutely no doubt that the establishment of the European powers should "have been infinitely postponed", if not permanently scuttled.

Another effect of their rule was the failure of the Zamorin of Calicut to establish the political unification of Malabar under a Hindu ruler. The Portuguese spoiled their relations with the ambitious Zamorin right in the beginning. They befriended several other princes such as the ruler of Cochun and, playing one against another, kept them completely disunited.

In the art of warfare they introduced new methods and better standards of conduct and efficiency. Their mastery in musketry and artillery was enviable, and they filled their enemies with awe when they stood in positions ready to open the mouths of their guns.

Their political influence, however, did not permeate far beyond the coastal India. If they were friends with the ruler of Vijayanagar, they never helped him against his Muslim enemies, and they never

tried to go far from their restricted field which was trade. Little wonder, therefore, even if they established some fortified position in this country, they tried to keep them as far as possible only within the range of the guns of their ships.

Nor could one say that they played any significant role in the expansion of the European trade with India. The discovery of a direct trade-route to India only helped them in supplanting the Muslim traders, and not to any worthwhile degree in developing some new markets for the European goods in India which remained only luxuries and curios and not any necessities of life. The development of new markets for the Indian cotton goods in Western Africa and Brazil was incidental rather to the discovery of new trade routes than to the zeal and genius of the Portuguese.

Yet when we talk of trade, we cannot forget the contribution of the Portuguese in establishing a degree of security on the trade routes of India. The nests of pirates which had made trade along the Malabar coast and elsewhere a risky venture were cleared or controlled, the Portuguese gun-boats plied on the trade-routes to give protection to the needy trading vessels ; and for all this if they levied any toll on the foreign or coastal trade of this country, the fact should better be understood than grudged.

Coming back, now to the cultural effects, here again the Portuguese could not boast of much. Although good numbers of the Indians in the Portuguese held territories of this country were converted to Christianity, yet Brahmans remained Brahmans and Kshatriyas. Kshatriyas though they called themselves now the Brahman-Christians and the Kshatriya-Christians. Bernier writes regarding the Portuguese in Bengal as "Christians only in name : the lives led by them were most detestable, massacring or poisoning one another without compunction or remorse."¹ No doubt the Jesuit missionaries sent by the Portuguese, i.e., Monserrate and Aquaviva, were received in the Mughal court in 1580 ; and again in 1594 when Xavier and Pinheiro made an effort to impress the Mughal Emperor with the greatness of their religion. They all failed in their mission, though the historical value of Monserrate's *commentaries* and Xavier's letters cannot in any way be minimised. The inter-marriages of the Portuguese with the Indians made the cultural current rather run more against than in their favour. Nor could they impress the Indians much when they tried to reform the Hindu social customs such as the sati in which they completely failed.

Every effort was made to make people in the Portuguese colonies to learn only the Portuguese language and forget their own. A strict order to this effect arrived in 1684 and even in 1745 Father D. Lourenzo de Santa Maria, Archbishop, ordained that Brahmans

1. Bernier. Francois, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, pp. 438, 443-444.

should learn the Portuguese within six months, extending the time limit for other castes to a year under pain of "not being able to contract matrimony with any man or woman who might not know or not make use of and speak Portuguese language." But even here their success was not very significant and the people of Goa continue to speak their own Konkani language which is akin to other Indian languages.

The causes of their failure

The Portuguese failed to establish an empire in India as did the English later on. The causes of their failure make an interesting study.

One of the most important causes of their failure was the lack of diplomacy and absence of moderation in the dealings of the highest Portuguese officers both with friends and foes. The unnecessarily revengeful behaviour of Vasco da Gama as we have already seen, gave a propaganda handle to the Muslim traders to defame the Portuguese before the Indians. The tactlessness of Cabral in his relations with Zamorin brought only humiliation to his countrymen when he had to flee Calicut. And with a very few honourable exceptions, the Governors or Viceroys who followed exhibited in this regard no better qualities at all.

Nor could the Portuguese set an example of personal integrity or good character in their internal administration in the territories they wrested from the Indians. They were known for corruption and arrogance. Massacring and "poisoning one another without compunction or remorse," is the character certificate that Bernier gave them. Albuquerque was the first, and probably the last Portuguese governor who possessed the germ of an administrator. Little wonder they failed to find a place in the hearts of the people which was so necessary when they introduced themselves in India.

The Portuguese, according to Bernier were "Christians only in name."¹ Yet they exhibited zeal and perpetrated ruthless cruelties on others to convert them to their faith. Their destruction of all the Hindu temples in Goa under the orders of the Portuguese king in 1540, and the introduction of inquisitions in 1560, only alienated the Indians from them instead of winning their sympathies. Their administrative machinery was fully used for the spread of their religion and it was only rarely that they would think of the welfare of the people who were committed to their charge.

Salaries of the Portuguese officials working in India were low. And therefore, a great majority of them carried on legal or illegal private trade relegating the loyalty to their national honour only to the background.

1. Bernier, *op cit.*, p. 358 ; see also, Rao, R. P., *Portuguese Rule in India* ; Cunha T.B., *Goa's Freedom Struggle*.

The introduction of mixed marriages in India, instead of developing their colonies, only diluted the awe in which the Portuguese were previously held. The new generation of Portuguese which developed, possessed the character neither of their fathers nor of mothers. They were a degenerate race, yet arrogant more than the this original stock of the Portuguese, and therefore a subject only of ridicule and hatred rather than of appreciation and love.

Then, as the Portuguese were learning to understand India and the Indians, the great Mughal power appeared on the scene. One Indian principality after another fell under the control of the Mughal rulers, the centres of weakness which were easy objects of the Portuguese exploitation slowly vanished, and they found their power and influence ultimately walled up on the coastal territories which they had earlier gained.

And by the time the Mughal power started declining after the death of Aurangzeb, the Portuguese found themselves in a position where they had to contend less with the indisciplined hosts of Indians than with the better trained Dutch and French and yet more disciplined, energetic, ambitious and diplomatic English to whom they were absolutely no match. The original naval supremacy of the Portuguese gave place to the ultimate naval superiority of the British. Little wonder, while the British power in India grew, the Portuguese power had only to rot and decay.

Then the Portuguese were not a big nation. The limited resources at home as they had, they too were divided when they had to control and defend their empire not only in India but also in Brazil which attracted their attention more than this country did.

And to add to all this, in 1580 Portugal herself passed under the control of Spain. The old importance of Lisbon was lost. The new masters of Portugal and of their eastern possessions had interests different from those of the Portuguese. The Spanish officers sent away to replace them in India were anxious more to exploit than to consolidate or expand the hold of their predecessors in India. And by the time the Portuguese regained their independence, much water had flown down the Narmada which did not make it easy for the Portuguese to pick up the old threads once again.

THE DUTCH

It was in the hour of the victory of their movement for independence against Philip II that the pent-up energies of the Dutch people suddenly burst forth and they entered into trade with the East with a zeal that won them laurels against the Portuguese. The first Dutch Company was organised in 1592. It was followed by a large number of other such concerns. The result was that it threatened a chaos

and the Dutch authorities amalgamated all of them together in 1602 and named it as Dutch East India Company giving it a charter to trade with the East.

The newly organised Dutch Company entered the field with a bang, and developed a sudden hold over the Spice Islands in the Far East where in 1623 took place the massacre of Amboyna in which the English suffered and were expelled from the Islands, though later on Cromwell was able to secure for this an indemnity of £ 85,000. In 1641 they captured Malacca from the Portuguese, and by 1658 the latter were forced to abandon Ceylon also to their rule.

Soon, however, they discovered their mistake in having been seduced by the East Indies while the key to the world dominion really lay in India. They therefore marched from the Eastern Archipelago and invaded Malabar. The Portuguese were dislodged from one position after another till the Dutch established their headquarters at Nagapatam and ousted them completely from southern India.

But soon the Dutch found themselves being paid back in India by the English in the same way as they had paid the English in the Spice Islands. Having suffered in the Far East, the English had decided to retrieve their fortunes in India where they concentrated their energies and steadily grew into a power which was much more than a match to the Dutch. The Dutch suffered one reverse after another as they came into clash with the British. Their fleet sailing up the Hooghly in 1759 found its way to a complete destruction, and by 1781 they were dislodged and expelled from their headquarters at Nagapatam as well.¹

THE FRENCH

“French development in India”, writes Sir Percival Griffiths, “may conveniently be divided into three phases, of which the first was the period of peaceful settlement, which ended about 1715 and during which the chief enemies of the French were the Dutch; next came the period of reorganisation and commercial development; and this in turn was followed by the military struggle with the English, which began about 1741 and for all practical purposes ended in 1763.”² We may here briefly discuss the first two phases, reserving the third phase to be discussed in the following chapter.

It was as early as 1527, i.e., almost fifty years before any Englishman arrived in India, that a French merchant ship appeared at Diu. Thereafter several individual efforts were made to develop trade contacts with the East, but generally the people of France exhibited

1. For further details read Datta, K.K., *Dutch in Bengal and Bihar*.
2. Griffiths, Sir Percival, *The British Impact on India*, p. 60.

very little interest in the matter as compared to the zeal and energy that the Englishman brought to bear on it; till ultimately inspired by the zeal and progress of the other European nations, the French Government itself moved, and as a result of the efforts of the French minister Colbert two companies were founded in 1664—the one known as the West India Company which was mainly to conquer and convert the heathen, and the other the East India Company to trade with India in competition with the Dutch and the English people.

Before the French East India Company, known as the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, actually came into existence, the French authorities made a lot of propaganda and invited the people to invest their money in it. But the response of the French trading classes proved to be poor for several reasons. First, because the French people had no faith in their Government and considered its propaganda as only a device to tax them, secondly, they still chafed at the losses suffered in war with Spain, and thirdly, they lacked the enterprising spirit necessary for such ventures. Richelieu the great French Cardinal had himself earlier remarked: "the temper of the French being so hasty as to wish the accomplishment of their desires in the moment of their conception, long voyages are not proper for them." The result was that of the capital of 15 million *livres* that was called for, only 2.50 million was collected, while as much as 3 million came as an advance from the King himself.

As the French East India Company came into existence, a double task was placed before it—to colonise the island of Madagascar and to trade with India. The aim in colonising Madagascar was "to secure French vessels a good port of call on the long voyage to India, and to place it at a point from which the Company's ships could easily push on in all directions."¹ On paper the project was good and quite enviable, but when it came to actual practice, the Madagascar plan proved to be too full of risks with the result that it was given up in favour of concentration of attention on direct trade with India alone.

Response of the French people for participating in the venture, however, remained anything but encouraging. Even the limited enthusiasm exhibited in 1664, began to ebb in 1665 when the shareholders were invited to pay the second instalment and it waned yet further when the third instalment was called for in 1666 with the result that the French company became more and more only a Department of the French Government itself.

Berber, a French agent in India, secured a *firman* of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and the first French factory was established at Surat in December 1667. Another French factory appeared at Masaulipatam in December 1669 and soon the French trade began to develop under the Director Generalship of Francis Caron. Under the

1 *Cambridge History of India*, vol. v, pp. 61-65.

advice of Caron the French Government sent in 1669 a strong fleet to Indian waters under De la Haye to show to the princes around 'a little sample of his master's power.'¹ But thanks to the differences that soon developed between De la Haye and Caron, the French squadron failed to exhibit its strength before the Dutch where it was needed the most ; while it clenched its fists before the king of Golkonda where it was needed the least, and held St. Thome against him for two years though ultimately in 1674 to capitulate. And all this, even though Caron had been recalled in 1672 and his successor in India, Francis Martin, gave every help and cooperation that De la Haye needed. The only impression the French fleet left in India was that it was too weak to stand up before the Dutch.

Francis Martin was, however, wiser than Caron, and if nothing else, by playing the king of Bijapur against that of Golkonda during these hostilities, he was able to secure from the former the site of Pondicherry which ultimately became a premier French settlement in India.

The forty years that followed, witnessed continuous hostilities between the French and the Dutch either both in Europe and India or in India alone. Pondicherry was captured by the Dutch in 1693, though it went back to the French in 1697 under the Treaty of Ryswick when Martin was re-appointed its Governor. Martin held this office till he died in 1706.

The confusion that followed the death of Martin who was one of the ablest French administrators ever sent to India, coupled with the continuous warfare with the Dutch, paralysed the French company's finances. And this state of affairs continued till 1720 when Jean Law reorganised the company and put it once again on a career of commercial growth. The company secured Mahe in 1725 and Karikal on the Coromandel coast in 1739. Settlements were also established at Qasim Bazar, Chandarnagore and Balasor. In Dumas who was appointed Governor of Pondicherry in 1735, the French in India were once again able to have an able and enterprising administrator. Dumas even secured permission from the Mughal authorities to coin money. And in this manner the company continued organising itself on better footing till 1740 when new challenge came to it from the British.

OTHER MINOR POWERS

The Danes organising their trading Company in 1616, founded their settlements in India, one at Tranquebar in 1620 and the other at Serampore in 1755. But they failed to find their way to an ultimate success and considered it better to sell off their factories to the British and to quit this country in 1845.

1. *ibid.*, p. 67.

An Austrian trading concern for the purpose was organised in 1723 and another in 1755. But both of them collapsed like the Swedish East India Company which got its charter in 1731 but soon found its way to extinction.

The British East India Company

ITS FOUNDATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The year 1600 is significant in the history of India for in that year far away from this land a small body of the merchants of London secured from Elizabeth the Great, Queen of England, a Royal Charter whereby was constituted the East India Company then named "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies." Entering into India this Trading Company soon changed its character and by 1765 it was a territorial power moving fast towards the creation of an Empire which was bound to control the destinies of India for about two centuries that followed. The circumstances leading to the foundation of this Company, its early constitution and development as a trading concern and its ultimate transformation into a territorial power are obviously a topic of paramount importance in the history of Modern India and must be discussed here.

The 15th century in Europe, as we have already seen, is a period of an extraordinary activity. During this period when the Ottoman Turks occupied the territories round-about the Levant, the European Commerce with the East passing through the territories occupied by them was compelled to set on the discovery of an ocean route to India. The Portuguese took a great deal of trouble in this and ultimately discovered a route by the Cape of Good Hope, as already referred to. Soon after this, Spain also entered the field which resulted in a clash between the two countries. Ultimately to restore peace between them the Pope had to intervene. In May, 1493 Pope Alexander VI issued a Bull whereby an imaginary line was drawn 370 leagues west and south of the Cape Verde Islands. By this Bull the discovered non-Christian lands were divided between Portugal and Spain. According to the Bull all the lands lying east of the line were to be a field of trading activity exclusively of the Portuguese, while those lying to the west were assigned to Spain. This Bull was ratified in 1506 by the Bull of Julius II and again in

1514 by the Bull of Leo X. Thus the Eastern Seas fell completely to the trading control of the Portuguese who remained their masters through the 16th century, and no Christian power in Europe had the courage to try to develop its contacts with the East thereby violating the proclamation of the Pope.

The conditions in Europe had, however, changed towards the beginning of the later half of the 16th century. The Papal authority began to decline and receive severe shocks. For long, England had been jealous of the growing riches of the Portuguese but the Papal Bulls had prevented her from developing her contacts with the East. The attempts of the English sailors to find out a new sea route to India had failed and now the English began seriously to seek for some other way out. Soon the Reformation movement was started in England and the Papal authority in that country was weakened. Portugal herself was annexed by Spain in 1580 and shortly after the English victory over the Spanish Armada opened the way for the British merchants to realise their long cherished desires of developing trade with the East. In 1591 the successful return of Rolf Fitch from his travels through India and Burma and the stories of his interesting experiences thrilled the whole nation and it was under these circumstances that the situation for the British merchants to prepare their plans for trade with the East began to mature. On 22 September 1599 some prominent merchants of London held a meeting at Founder's Hall and from this meeting sprang up an Association for the purpose of trade with India. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Lord Mayor and after preparing the plan a petition was submitted to the Queen to incorporate them into a Company for the purpose of trading with the Indies. On 31 December 1600 the Queen issued a Royal Charter to the petitioners as required and thus was the East India Company founded.

The Charter authorised the Company to trade and traffic freely "into and from the East Indies, in the countries and parts of Asia and Africa and into and from all islands, posts, havens, cities, creeks, towns and places of Asia and Africa and America or any of them beyond the Cape of Bona Esperanza to the Straits of Magellan." The Charter was granted for a period of 15 years but it could be ended at any time with a two-year notice.

The Constitution

In this Charter the constitution of the Company was duly laid down and its powers and privileges were defined. The Company was to be a Regulated Company which signified according to S.C. Ilbert that "the members of such Company were subject to certain common regulations and were entitled to certain common privileges but each of them traded on his separate capital and there was no Joint-

Stock.”¹ It was thus to be different from a Joint Stock Company. Its members were to subscribe to each trading expedition to the East and the profits of these expeditions were to be distributed amongst them in proportion to their contributions.

Thus each trading expedition differed from the other in its membership and in the proportion of profits received by the individual members

But in many way, the Company was to be different from a purely regulated concern. No member of it could have a separate trading contact outside the body and he must join others in contributing his subscriptions for a particular trading expedition which was always arranged by the ‘Committee’ or the ‘Directors’ of the Company. Herein thus lay the seeds which later on germinated into a Joint Stock Company that initially was not proposed to be set up.

The entire business of the Company was to be controlled by a Governor assisted by 24 Committees. This Controlling body was to make arrangements for shipping the merchandise, carrying it from one part of the world to the other and for disposing of the imported goods. To facilitate an efficient working, later on a Deputy Governor, Secretary and a Treasurer were added to the body. It would perhaps be essential to explain here the word ‘Committee’ which signifies not a particular body but an individual or in other words a Committee-man. It was these ‘Committees’ who later on took the name of ‘Directors’. The ‘Committees’ were to be annually elected by the shareholders of the Company meeting in a ‘Court of Proprietors’, each of the shareholders, without any consideration of the number of shares held by him, having only one vote. The first 24 Committees and the first Governor, Thomas Smith, were, however, nominated in the Charter itself. The authority of having only one vote enjoyed by each shareholder irrespective of the number of shares held, later on developed an interesting practice whereby those having a big number of shares began to distribute them among their relatives and others in whom they had faith, temporarily at the time of the annual elections for the purpose of securing more votes.

The membership of the Company was not confined only to those having a share in its capital. It could also be secured through inheritance or presentation by paying an entrance fee, through apprenticeship, service, etc. In some cases even those expected to help in some way could become its members. Generally, however, a person could become its member by paying an amount of £200. In the initial stages the total membership of the Company was 217 but later on it was greatly increased.

So far as the power and the authority of the Company was

1. Herbert S C, *Govt. of India Historical Survey*, page 7.

concerned, besides the trading powers as already enumerated, the Company was given extensive powers to issue orders or ordinances and to make bye-laws in accordance with the laws and customs of the realm, for the good government of the Company, for the proper control of its servants and "for the better advancement and continuance of the said trade and traffic." The Company had the judicial authority to punish its servants for their offences by imprisonment or fine.

The monopoly granted to the Company was obviously extensive, but if considered according to those circumstances it had its own justification. Those were the days when the maritime trade with the far lying countries like India was very much hazardous owing to the trade rivalries among the different European countries. Besides, the sea-routes were infested by pirates and the trade interests had generally to be secured against them. Then the Company was also required to have a proper pomp and show in order to secure the required trade concessions from the native rulers. And finally, those were the times when international diplomacy had not yet evolved. Under all these circumstances, obviously, an extensive monopoly and power had to be granted to the Company.

"British authority in India (1600 to 1765)," writes S.C. Ilbert, "may be traced, historically to a two-fold source. It is derived partly from the British Crown and Parliament, partly from the Great Moghals and other native rulers of India." From 1600 to 1765, Ilbert writes further, "The East India Company were primarily traders."¹ But as the time passed this trading concern progressively assumed territorial power and in fact by the year 1765 its territorial character was more or less established. The power as derived from the different sources and the change thereby effected in the Company's character, may briefly be surveyed.

POWER DERIVED FROM CROWN AND PARLIAMENT

Queen Elizabeth had died in 1603 and by this time the Company had become so prosperous that James I, the successor of Elizabeth, according to W.W. Hunter, offered himself "to become a freeman of the Company and to support it with the royal authority and the right of carrying the royal flag. The Company foresaw, however, that with so high a personage among them, they would lose 'free election' of their officers, who must in the end become the nominees of the King and Court. They also feared being 'drawn into actions of war' and costly enterprises of the State. They thus avoided the rock on which the French Companies afterwards suffered shipwreck and humbly declined His Majesty's proposal"² Yet how-

1. *ibid.*, pp. 9-15.

2. Sir Hunter, W.W., *A History of British India*, Vol. II. quoted from *Calendar of State Papers East Indies*, 1622-24, No. 511.

ever, the Stuart ruler did not refuse to renew the Company's Charter in 1609. The Charter was renewed 'for ever', though it could be revoked at any time by three years' notice.

Six years after this some additional powers were granted to the Company for enforcing the martial law in order to maintain discipline on long voyages. The Charter of 1623 enhanced the Company's powers of controlling and punishing its servants yet further. The Company was also empowered to grant commissions to its Chief Officers and the Presidents for the purpose of punishing the offences of the Company's servants on land. It was, however, specifically laid down that for capital cases the verdict had to be found by jury.

Under Charles I

In the time of Charles I, however, the Company fell into tough circumstances. The Company had to face in the East Indies a very severe trade competition with the Dutch, which dwindled its profits considerably. Not only this, the Company was expelled from Malaya Archipelago and this Commercial rivalry ultimately resulted in February 1623 in the massacre of the Company's servants at Amboyna. The Company's troubles did not end here. While outside the country, it had to suffer such humiliating developments, at home the king instead of expressing any sympathy rather showed a hostile attitude towards the Company. In 1635 Charles I permitted Sir William Courten to set up a new Trading body for the purpose of trading with the East Indies under the name of Courten's Association, also called the Assada Company. Although the new Company did not secure any large measure of success in the field, yet while on one hand losing the royal support, the old Company on the other hand had to face some competition at the hands of the new trading concern.

Under Oliver Cromwell

During the time of Cromwell the fortune smiled once again over the old Company. Oliver Cromwell supported its interests and by the Treaty of Westminster, signed in 1654, a sum of £85,000 was exacted from the Dutch for the Company as a compensation for the massacre of Amboyna. In 1657 he granted a new Charter whereby a union was effected between the Courten's Association and the old Company. The Charter of 1657 was significant also in the fact that it changed the very character of the Company. Till 1612 the Company had acted only as a regulated concern whereunder contributions were made by its members on the basis of each voyage. After 1612, however, the members had started contributing their capital neither for a single voyage, nor for a series of voyages or for a period of years. The practice that now commenced created many joint-stocks a separate account of each one of which had to be kept, which resulted into a lot of confusion. The Charter of 1657 besides

ending the rivalry between the two Companies also amalgamated the various joint-stocks into "one continuous joint-stock" with the consequences that the new joint Company was now "transformed from a feeble relic of the medieval trade into guild a vigorous forerunner of the modern Joint Stock Company." Under the new Charter anybody could become a member of the Company by an entrance fee of £5 and by a subscription of £100 to the Company's stock. The Charter also laid down that no member could have a right to vote unless he had a stock worth £500, and no member could be elected a member of a Committee unless he had a stock worth £1000. The term of office of the Governor and the Deputy-Governor was reduced to two years.

The Service rendered to the Company by Cromwell was thus great but the black spot on it was that Cromwell borrowed £15,000 from it on behalf of the State but never repaid the money. This, in a way, started the nefarious practice of securing a due price from the Company against a grant of privilege.

Oliver Cromwell died in 1657 and in 1660 the restoration was made by calling back Charles II to resume the English throne. The year 1660 was a turning point in the history of the Company in the fact that after this, while on the one hand the Company developed its prosperity by leaps and bounds on the other, it changed its character from a purely trading concern to a territorial power. It may be interesting to survey the circumstances which lead to this change in the Company's character.

The transfer to the Company of the land of Bombay by Charles II in 1669 was only one of the steps which changed the Company's character. The difficulties in which its commerce found itself "in a strange land led often to war and consequent territorial advance." Even as early as the closing years of the 17th century the rising of customs duty from 2 to 3½ per cent compelled the Company to raise its head against the Mughal rule. The more the Company involved itself in the Indian politics, the heavier its burden became. Thus early in his Indian career, in 1700, Clive felt it "immediately necessary to secure to the Company such an income as will keep them clear of charges and bring in besides a supply for loading ships home."¹ And this compelled Clive to ask the Nawab of Murshidabad to assign to the Company larger revenue from lands, besides the sole right of trading in certain districts which the Company already enjoyed. This is how the political character of the Company developed and from "at least the middle of the 18th century, the profits of the Company were derived as well from the territorial acquisition as from their commerce. And the close relation between Territory and Commerce in the early days is revealed in the confusions of the Territorial with the Commerce Accounts of which the Commissioners appointed

1. Thomson and Clive, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, pp 98-106.

in 1773 . . . set the fashion of complaining."¹

This confusion, however, could last only till 1765, after which the Territorial motives definitely superseded the Commercial interests. Mr Ruthnaswamy has beautifully explained how this happened : "till about the year 1765 the balance of trade between India and England was made by the exportation of silver from England to India. Afterwards bullion for some reason or other seems to have been exported or came to be exported in diminishing quantities to India. To make up for this deficiency the practice came to be introduced on a certain portion of the revenues of the Company to be set apart for the purchase of goods for exportation to England." This investment in a way changed the very course of the Company's policy. This resort to investment gave an "artificial fillip to the exports from India to England and produced a false image of the wealth of the country, which naturally raised the desire of the East India shareholders to have their dividends increased." An immediate consequence of this in Bengal was that £2,00,000 were added to the annual dividends of the proprietors of the Company, which added to the old dividends brought a constant charge upon the Indian trade and revenue of £3,00,000 a year, which had to be provided for at all events. "To provide for this increasing appetite for dividends the investment had to be increased. The amount of the first investment from Bengal which amounted to about £5,00,000 was raised by the year 1767-68 to £7,00,000." To provide this, the Company's external and internal policy had to be readjusted, and this was responsible for an endless chain of wars. The relations with France in the south were governed by the state of the funds available for investment, they being peaceful if there were enough money and hostile when there was a deficiency. "Territorial losses led to diminution of the investment and territorial gains led to a welcome increase." Obviously, therefore, if the shareholders were to be satisfied the territorial expansion in India had to be resorted to.²

The Charters granted to the Company in the time of Charles II were significant in the fact that they recognised this slow change in the Company's character and granted it the power required in the changed circumstances. The first among these Charters was that of 1661 which besides extending the Company's privileges on the new territorial lines, reorganised its structure.

Charter of 1661

The more important provisions of this Charter were those in which—

1. The Company was reorganised on a joint-stock basis, each member who had a share capital of £500 retaining the right to one vote.

1. See Burke's Works, Bohn's Edition, Vol. IV, page 31 ; Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that made British Administrative System*, p. 4

2. Ruthnaswamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-10.

2. To meet the existing circumstances more effectively the Company's power and command over its fortresses were strengthened and the Company was empowered to appoint Governors and subordinate officers for their administration.

3. The Company's power to govern its employees and to punish their disobedience and misdemeanour was enhanced.

4. The Company was also authorised to empower the Governor and Council of each one of its factories or a trading centre at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta to administer to the persons employed under them both the civil and criminal justice according to the English law. Where there was no Governor, the chief factor of a trading centre and his counsel could send a man for trial where there was a Governor.

The Charter of 1668 was a further step in the transition of the Company from a trading body to a territorial power. And when in 1669 the island of Bombay was transferred to the Company, the Charter of that year strengthened its territorial power yet further by granting to it the full powers of sovereignty to fortify and defend the newly acquired place and also to levy taxes on its inhabitants. So far as the port and island of Bombay were concerned, the Company could freely make laws and issue ordinances for the good government of the place. The right to coin money at Bombay was given to the Company in 1676.

The next significant step towards this direction was the Charter of 1683 which empowered the Company to raise military forces within a prescribed limit and to declare war on or make peace with the heathen nations of America, Africa or Asia. The Company was also empowered to use martial law for the defence of its forts. While granting these powers, however, as A.B. Keith comments, the essential principle was asserted that "the acquisition of sovereignty by subjects of the Crown is on behalf of the Crown and not in their own right," and, therefore, the Crown's power to interpose its authority in the Company's power to make war and peace was reserved.

The Charter of 1686 granted by Charles II while confirming the existing rights and privileges of the Company, added to its power yet further. In 1687 the Company was authorised to establish a Municipality and a Mayor's Court at Madras. The Company was also authorised to appoint admirals and other sea officers and it could also now coin a species of money. The grants made in 1687 were thus another significant step towards the establishment of the Company's territorial character.

The Glorious Revolution

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, however, several factors intervened to check the further progress of the Company. The Whigs who now came to power were no supporters of monopolies and, therefore, a new Company came into existence which for a considerable time remained a source of headache to the old Company. In India too the Company unwittingly challenged the Mughal authority and in consequence had to suffer severe moral and material losses. The prestige and influence of Sir Josiah Child, the head of the Company, had also for some time been declining. And all these factors conspired to make the Company's life precarious. The matters came to a head when in 1691 the Parliament decided that the trade with the East-Indies could best be carried on only by a joint-stock company enjoying extensive power and, therefore, it was proposed that the two concerns might be amalgamated. Sir Josiah Child stood in the way which alienated the Parliament against the old Company and the former requested the Crown that the Company be served with a three years' notice to wind up its business and that a Charter should be issued to the new Company instead. It was a very severe trial for Sir Josiah whose presence of mind, however, saved the situation and lavish gifts to the high government officials secured the old Company a new Charter in 1693.

The Charter of 1693

The new Charter granted to the Company, confirmed its existing powers and made certain further additions to them. By further raising the Company's capital by £7,44,000 its membership was greatly increased. No one could now subscribe more than £10,000 as an individual stock. The right to vote was now to be enjoyed only by those holding at least £1,000 stock and the maximum number of votes an individual enjoyed was fixed at 10. Only those members could be appointed to the office of Governor or Deputy Governor who held the stock of £4,000 and for a 'Committee', a minimum stock of £1,000 was declared essential. The privileges granted to the Company were to continue for 21 years unless withdrawn earlier by a three years' notice.

The Later Developments

The Charter of 1694 made the principle of rotation of officers compulsory. Out of 24 Committees, 8 were to retire every year. In the same year a sort of attack was also made on the existing privileges of the Company with a resolution which was passed to the effect that "all the subjects of England had a right to trade with East-Indies unless prohibited by Act of the Parliament." This was necessitated when the Company procured the detention of a ship called 'Redbridge' which was suspected to be bound for the East-Indies. This action of the Company was disliked by certain members of the Parliament,

and hence the above resolution. Though, the Company being strong enough the resolution had almost no adverse effect upon its position, yet it was significant for the fact that the Parliament's control over the Company's affairs was once again asserted.

The next Charter was granted to the Company in 1698 whereby certain changes were made in the existing rules for the administration of the Company. The qualification for the voters was once again reduced from £1,000 to £500 stock and the maximum number of votes one could now enjoy was fixed at 5. Rest of the rules continued almost unchanged.

The Union

The trouble with the new Company, however, continued. Both the trading concerns tried to purchase power and privileges by making offers of huge loans to the State. Montagu, the Chancellor of Exchequer, actually took advantage of the situation and by borrowing huge sums from both sought to relieve the State of certain financial burdens. He secured from the old Company a loan of £7,00,000 and promised to confirm its existing privileges through an Act of Parliament. Another sum of £2,00,000 was secured from the new Company and similar promises were made to it as well. To meet some of the promises, in September 1698, an effort was made to reconstitute the new Company on the lines of the constitution of the old concern. Almost similar powers and privileges as of the old concern were granted to it and it was named as "the English Company Trading in the East-Indies." Here was the signal for a severe competition between the two concerns which was bound to prove ruinous for the ultimate interests of both.

The new Company indeed fell in the thick of troubles right from the beginning, having given away all its capital as a loan. It was left with insufficient money to carry on its business. As compared to this, however, the old Company was in much better circumstances. The old Company, having in its possession the established settlements and factories and served by experienced servants, was in much better position. Still, however, even the old Company could not escape certain serious losses as a result of the competition as well as the struggle between the servants of the two concerns in India. This state of affairs continued till 1702, when the situation changed and the prospects of a war on the question of Spanish succession brought the two concerns together. An agreement was arrived at between them which took the legal form of an "Indenture Tripartite, Queen Anne and the two Companies." According to the agreement reached at in 1702, the old Company was required to wind up its separate existence after 7 years. In the meanwhile, however, the trade of the two concerns was to be carried on jointly under the direction of 24 managers,

12 each to be elected by the two. The business was to be conducted in the name of the English Company.

At the end of the seven years, i.e., in 1709, the old Company surrendered its Charter to Queen Anne and thus was the new Company created by merging the two concerns, under the name of "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East-Indies." The constitution of the new Company as laid down in the agreement of 1702 was almost the same as of the old concern, though in it a more modern terminology was used: (i) the new Company was to consist of all the persons who held a share in its capital stock which amounted then to £2,000,000; (ii) each person having £500 stock was entitled to have one vote and take part in the meetings of the Proprietors; (iii) the body of the Proprietors when holding a meeting was to be called a 'General Court of Proprietors'; (iv) these Proprietors were to elect every year from among themselves a body of 24 Directors each of whom was required to have £2,000 stock; (v) the quorum for the meetings of the directors was fixed at 13; and (vi) it was laid down that at least 5 General Courts would be held every year or in other words the Proprietors were to hold at least a quarterly meeting. (vii) A committee was also to be chosen from among the Proprietors which was to frame bye-laws in accordance with the existing Acts of the Parliament. These bye-laws were to have the same force as of the Acts of the Parliament.

It would be interesting to note that the new Company came into existence almost at the same time as the decline of the Mughal Power in India commenced after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707.

The Subsequent Developments

The practice of securing more power and privileges in return for loans, which had already commenced, took a serious turn after the creation of the new Company. Thus, by the Acts of 1711, 1730 and 1744 etc., many privileges were granted in return for huge loans from the Company. The Charters of 1709, 1726, 1754, 1757 and 1758 gave the Company certain powers in connection with the regulation of military forces in India, distribution of booty and the occupation of the new territories, etc. Thus did the Company increasingly get power and privileges from the Crown and the Parliament of England, ultimately establishing its territorial and political character by the year 1765.

POWER DERIVED FROM MUGHALS AND OTHERS

The Company's authority in India, as already mentioned, was derived as much from the British Crown and Parliament as from the great Mughals and the other native rulers of India. A sketch of its authority derived from the native powers of India, may also, therefore, be given. In India, in the beginning the Company could develop

its contacts only with the subordinates of the Mughal Emperor, and here too the influence of the Portuguese prevented their being treated as cordially as the English merchants desired. In 1611, the efforts of James I through William Hawkins, to obtain from the Mughal Emperor the necessary permission for regular trade, came to a naught although the local authorities of Surat did grant the English merchants some trading privileges which later on were confirmed by an imperial *firman*. In 1615-19, Sir Thomas Roe was sent as an Ambassador of the English King in order to secure a treaty settlement with the Mughal Emperor. but he too failed in securing anything more than a permission from prince Khurram, the Viceroy of Gujarat, to manage the affairs of the English factory and trade free from local interference. In fact the English merchants could secure no worthwhile trading position in India so long as the Portuguese influence at the Mughal Court continued to be strong. It was only after the decline of this influence that the English Company began to gather strength.

The Settlement of Madras

Although the English trade at Surat was established right from the beginning, yet it was not there that the Company secured its first territorial authority. In this connection it was rather a Hindu Prince, the local chief of Wandiwash, who, in 1639, came to the Company's help and empowered it to govern Madras, build a fortress therein and mint money on the condition that the Company paid to the chief 50 per cent of the revenues and customs of the Madras Port. Thus, in September 1641, the Company's headquarters on the Coromandel coast were established at a station named as Fort St. George. In 1645-47, the Hindu Raja of Golkonda, overran the territories surrounding the Company's settlements at Madras but the existing privileges of the Company were permitted by the new ruler to continue. Regarding the division of the customs, a readjustment was made in 1658, whereby it was decided that henceforward the Company would pay a fixed sum of 480 pagodas as the ruler's share. This amount was increased to 12,000 pagodas in 1672, in return for which the Company was given unrestricted authority of government, command and justice at Madras and all local interference was withdrawn. In 1687, Golkonda itself was conquered by Aurangzeb but the power and privileges of the Company still continued intact. It should, however, be necessary to mention here that the position of the English Company at Madras at this time was only plenary and sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor over Madras was fully recognised by paying a substantial quit rent and by agreeing to coin only a particular pattern of the Rupee as permitted by the Mughal authorities. In 1693, the Company obtained another grant of 3 villages adjoining Madras and in 1702 5 more villages were granted to it, the latter though were resumed by the local authorities three years after. In 1717, as a result of the mission of John Surman to the Court of Emperor Farrukh Siyar, the Company's right to these villages was confirmed, but this confirmation was of no avail because the local authorities refused to honour it.

The Settlement and Development of Calcutta

In Bengal, for a considerable time, the Company obtained no effective sovereignty anywhere, though in 1656, it secured certain trade privileges from Shah Shuja for which, however, despite the efforts of the Company no imperial confirmation could be secured. In 1678 the Governor renewed the existing grant with the Emperor's approval but a *firman* from the Emperor himself could be obtained only in 1680. The company, however, had to face certain serious troubles at the hands of the local officials who interfered with its trade in saltpetre, resulting in the declaration of war by the Company on the Mughals in which, however, at this stage it had to face nothing but a discomfiture. Peace was restored in 1690 as a result of the efforts of the Bombay authorities and now the Company secured an imperial grant under which it was free from all dues in return for annual payment of 4,000 rupees. It was after the conclusion of this in August 1690, that the Company established a settlement at Sutanuti, a site where the future Calcutta developed. The factory was fortified in 1696 and in 1698 the Company secured the zamindari rights over the three villages of Sutanuti, Kalikata and Gobindpur in consideration of the payment of 12,000 rupees a year. The name Fort William was given to the fortified factory which in 1700 became the headquarters of a Presidency. In the villages, thus acquired, while on the Englishmen the Company exercised its authority which was derived from the Royal Charters and worked through Mayor's court, the civil and criminal authority over the Indians was exercised only in the Zamindari Courts, the capital sentence here being subject to the confirmation of the Nazim of Murshidabad. In certain respects the Company's authority at Calcutta was rather inferior to that at Madras. Thus for instance, down to 1757 it enjoyed no right to mint coins at the former place.

Norris mission

The rights of the Company being insufficient, the new English Company made an effort in 1698 to regularise its relations with the Mughal Emperor through a mission under Sir William Norris. Norris was sent to Aurangzeb as a special ambassador under the authority of the English King in order to secure the formal grant of the trade concessions and of the right to exercise full English jurisdiction over the English settlement. For this purpose, Norris enjoying a rank of a King's Counsel was empowered to claim a full authority over all the Englishmen in India including those who were under the employ of the old Company. It was natural, therefore, that the old Company should have exercised its influence to bring about complete failure of the mission, in which it actually succeeded.

Surman Mission

In 1707, when the united Company came into existence, no

effort was immediately made to secure a regular treaty with the Mughal Emperor. It was only in 1714-17 that a mission under Surman, as already referred to, was sent to Emperor Farrukhsiyar. Surman was able to secure 3 *firmans* from the Emperor addressed to the local chiefs of Gujarat, Hyderabad and Bengal, confirming the existing privileges of the Company and extending its authority further. But that was the time when the imperial authority was no more obeyed in the far lying provinces and the *firman* secured by the Company therefore could make no change in its position.

The Bengal Revolution

The decline of the imperial authority, however, helped the Company in another way. When there was no interference from the Centre the contest for power in the outlying provinces developed from which by intrigues and diplomacy the Company derived the best advantage. After the inconclusive defeat of Siraj-ud-daula before the Battle of Plassey, the Company forced on him a formal treaty in February 1757, whereby the Company's existing privileges were confirmed and it was further authorised to fortify and coin its own money. Later on, after the Battle of Plassey, when Siraj-ud-daula was removed and in his place Mir Jafar was raised to the Nawabship of Bengal, the Company secured and consolidated its position yet further as a result of the grants made by the latter. The Company's sovereignty in Calcutta was recognised and it was granted sufficient land so as to enable it to maintain a military force. The new Nawab also accepted a resident of the Company in his Court. The 24 Parganas, the acquisition of which had been confirmed by an imperial *firman* of 1717, were now permitted to pass to the Company as zamindari. Later on in 1760, Mir Jafar was replaced by Mir Kasim, which brought to the Company yet further territorial powers, securing to it the districts of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur free of all charges. It is clear, that, therefore thanks to the grants made by the local authorities, the Company's sovereignty over Calcutta, the three districts mentioned above and 24 Parganas was complete though it was subject to nominal sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor. A detailed account of all this, i.e., the Bengal Revolution, follows.

This was thus how the Company derived its authority both from the British Crown and Parliament, and the native chiefs of India.

GOVERNMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF COMPANY'S FACTORIES

We have already had a short account of the constitution of the Company. Here it would be advisable to have a short sketch of the government and organisation of its factories in India. Each of the Company's factories in India was generally a fortified place, enclosing

within itself the necessary warehouses, a small colony of merchants and the Company's officers and servants who were classified as writers, factors and merchants. The boarding and lodging expenses of all these were met by the Company and their pattern of living was almost like a medieval college or a monastery. These servants being fixed in a regular time-scale got their promotions according to seniority and could rise even to the high office of the members of the factory's council. But their salaries were extremely low, a factor getting £20, while a merchant got only £40 per annum. They were, however, duly compensated by a full freedom allowed to them to trade and traffic in India entirely on their own account, and a factor's profits which he made from this can well be explained in the words of W.W. Hunter : "there were youths who lost at 'dice, lance, knight or cards' two or three years' salary in as many hours—not a difficult feat, as a writer's pay was but £20 per annum. One famous delinquent is said to have parted with £1,000 in a night."¹ This practice continued so long as the Company was a commercial concern.

Each of these factories was governed by a Governor in Council, the Governor also being known as the President. The Governor, though being an executive head of the factory, enjoyed all his powers only in his council, the members of which were generally chosen from among the senior merchants. The council was an effective body which checked as well as advised the Governor in his administrative activities ; this practice having been necessitated to keep the Governor from rising into a rebellion. Such thus was the government of the factory which later on was termed as Presidency ; the word 'Presidency' evidently having developed from the word 'President.'

1. Hunter, W.W., *A Short History of British India*, p.10.,

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The First Carnatic War, 1746-1748

We have traced the development of the French power in India upto 1740, and have seen in the sixth chapter the way it was able to defeat the other European interests till it was called upon to meet a new challenge from the British. In the seventh chapter we discussed the foundation and early development of the British East India Company. The clash between the British and the French that was imminent came about the year 1746, and it continued till the French were completely eliminated from the Indian political arena and of all the European powers in India the British alone remained to rule the roost. The Anglo-French conflict, which ultimately led to the supremacy of the British not only over the other European contestants but also over the tottering power of the Indian princes, can be divided into three stages : the first from 1746 to 1748, the second from 1749 to 1757 and the third from 1758 to 1763. For the enactment of these three stages of the contest between the two European powers, the ground was offered by the Deccan, particularly those parts of it which went under the name of Carnatic that led to all the three stages being termed as the three Carnatic wars. Hence, before we discuss the first stage of the drama, or in other words the 'First Carnatic War', it would be advisable to have a review of the circumstances that prepared this ground.

THE TOTTERING POWER OF THE INDIAN PRINCES IN THE DECCAN

"To me," said Lord Curzon in a speech at the Mansion House, London, in July 1904, "the message is carved in granite, it is hewn out of the rock of doom - that our work is righteous and that it shall endure." And Michael Edwardes, or for that reason any Indian chauvinist or an ardent Marxist may jeer at it as much as he would, Curzon did believe "that the destiny of the Indian people... had been entrusted by Providence to the British"¹ - the truth of which may probably be verified from the fact that the development of the

1. Edwardes, Michael, *High Noon of the Empire* (1965), pp. 247, 251, 252.

British empire in the Deccan, or in the whole of India, was far less due to the zeal and zest of the British than to what Prof. Alfred Martineau calls the "Blind forces which we sometimes call chance and sometimes destiny"¹ The political confusion that developed in the Deccan as a result of the decline of the central Mughal authority in India, and found the British as the only power to take advantage of the situation, is the point under contemplation.

Of all the places in India, it was the Deccan which offered its soil not only to accommodate the grave of the last great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, but also to have in it the grave of the great Mughal Empire which had been nurtured with blood, sweat and diplomacy through generations from Bahar down to his own times. As Aurangzeb died in 1707, his Empire began to fall into ruins, and out sprang from them one Chin Qilich Khan who obtained "from the successors of Aurangzeb the titles of Nizam-ul-Mulk and Asaf Jah, (and) took steps to make the Subahdarship of Southern India hereditary in his family."² But it is in vain that Yusuf Hussain, the biographer of Nizam-ul-Mulk has eulogised his hero by calling him "a pastmaster in diplomacy," and by mentioning the fact that the parting advice of Nadir Shah in 1739 to Mohammad Shah the Mughal Emperor in India was that he "should be watchful of the Marathas and always act in accordance with the counsels of Nizam-ul-mulk, who was a man of great worth."³ But the great worth of this hereditary Viceroy of the Deccan proved to be of no avail. The rot that had commenced in the body-politic of Deccan during the time of Aurangzeb, continued unabated, and while the Nizam could not control the rising tide of the Maratha recklessness, several other powers raised their heads which he could not suppress and which made the confusion worse confounded. May be, the "Blind forces" we have already alluded to also had in this a big part to play. The story is indeed interesting.

Nizam-ul-Mulk and his Difficulties

We may try to recapture briefly the events already discussed in the earlier chapters. When Shivaji died on 3 April 1680, he was succeeded by his son Sambhaji who, though brave, fell into an 'unguarded life of debauchery' in which state he was captured at Sangameswar and thereafter subjected to horrible torture which ended his life in March 1689. Raigarh, the capital of Shivaji was captured and the entire family of Sambhaji including his son Shahu fell into Aurangzeb's hands.

The death of Sambhaji and the capture of his minor son Shahu

1. *The Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 125.
2. Malleison, G.B., *Rulers of India*, Lord Clive (1962), p.8.
3. Yusuf Hussain, *The First Nizam* (The Life and Times of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I) 1963, pp. 113, 196.

by the Mughals took away from the Marathas their rallying-point. Though Rajaram, the younger brother of Sambhaji, was acknowledged by the Marathas as the head of their state, every Maratha captain took upon himself the independent duty of harassing the Mughals, all acting as elusively as the wind with no stronghold or a central head whose capture could bring the Maratha nation to acknowledge defeat. Rajaram died in 1700 to be succeeded by his son, Shivaji II, who was only a minor and whose regency was taken up by his masterful widowed mother Tarabai.

Aurangzeb died in 1707 bewailing his failure to bring the Marathas to their knees. A war of succession among his sons followed in which Prince Azam Shah released Shahu with a view to bringing about a contest for power between him and Tarabai so as to weaken the Maratha power. The desired happened, the Maratha chiefs were divided, many of them took up the cause of Shahu who captured Satara making it the seat of his government. Tarabai retired to Panhala and carried on her resistance in the name of Shivaji II. In 1714, however, yet another blow to the cause of the Maratha unity was administered when Rajasbai, another widow of Rajaram, led a revolt against Tarabai whom she defeated, and thereafter established herself in Kolhapur in the name of her son, Sambhaji II who became the new ruler of the Marathas.

It was in these circumstances that on the advice of the Sayyad brothers, Farrukh Siyar, the Mughal Emperor, appointed Nizam-ul-Mulk to the viceroyalty of the Deccan in 1713; for the Nizam's hold over the *Turans* had made his presence in the capital dangerous to the realisation of their ambitions. When Nizam-ul-Mulk came to the Deccan he faced there nothing but chaos. Zulfiqar Khan, his predecessor, had in an agreement conferred the right of *chauth*¹ and *sardeshmukhi*² of the whole of the Deccan on Shahu. Nizam-ul-Mulk took advantage of the Maratha dissensions and started establishing the shattered Mughal authority once again. He defeated Balaji Vishwanath, the Peshwa³ of Shahu, in the vicinity of Purandhar, but had not yet fully consolidated his authority when he was recalled to Delhi in May 1715, to be succeeded by Hussain Ali Khan as the new Viceroy of the Deccan.⁴ Nizam-ul-Mulk, however, was not permitted to continue in Delhi for long by the Sayyad brothers who wanted to play with his career and now appointed him to Malwa to which province he proceeded on 15 March 1719.

As soon as Nizam-ul-Mulk left the Deccan, Balaji Vishwanath re-asserted his position and in March 1718 forced an agreement on his successor Hussain Ali Khan which besides getting him a

1. One fourth of the revenue.
2. Ten per cent of the remaining three-fourths of the revenue.
3. Prime Minister.
4. Yusuf Hussain, *op. cit.*, 546.

diplomatic victory over Kolhapur, considerably weakened the Mughal authority in the South, while it gave "a death-blow to Mughal prestige all over the country."¹

Under this agreement, which Husain Ali Khan promised to get ratified by the Emperor at Delhi, as already discussed in the earlier chapters, (1) Shahu's claims over all the territories which Shivaji had conquered from the Mughals and the rulers of Golkonda and Bijapur were to be recognised and such of these territories as were the Mughals at the time, were to be restored to him forthwith; (2) the Maratha claims over the territories that had been captured by them from Hyderabad, Berar, Gondwana and the Carnatic were also to be accepted. (3) the Marathas would be permitted to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six Mughal provinces of the Deccan, including the tributary states of Mysore, Tanjore, and Trichinopoly; (4) all the Maratha families still held as hostages in Delhi would be released; (5) and in return for all this Shahu would help the Mughal Emperor to maintain law and order in the Deccan and would also assist him with fifteen thousand soldiers, whenever needed.

After the agreement had been signed, Balaji Vishwanath with his fifteen thousand men accompanied Husain Ali Khan to Delhi where Farrukh Siyar after being cruelly blinded and kept in captivity for two months, was brutally done to death by the Sayyad Brothers. His successor Rafi-ud-Darajat, twenty-year-old youth who was put on the throne, confirmed the agreement.

To continue with the story of Nizam-ul-Mulk, as soon as he left for Malwa, his enemies being jealous of his influence, began to poison the mind of the Sayyad Brothers against him. In a bid to destroy Nizam-ul-Mulk the Sayyad Brothers ordered Dilawar Khan with a huge force to march against him. In these circumstances Nizam-ul-Mulk decided to leave Malwa and proceed for safety to the Deccan from where he had received messages of Rani Rajasbai and several Muslim nobles imploring his aid for their respective causes. The pursuing force of Dilawar Ali Khan, however, did not permit him to go beyond Husainpur where a sanguinary battle was fought in which Dilawar lost five thousand of his men together with his own life, the casualties on the other side being only very few. When the news of this dreadful development reached the Sayyad Brothers, they looked blue and in a bid to conciliate Nizam-ul-Mulk, forwarded to him the Imperial patent to confirm him to the viceroyalty of the Deccan.

Before, however, Nizam-ul-Mulk could settle himself completely in his new assignment, the events took yet another turn. In Delhi the power and position of the Sayyad Brothers was a nine day's

1. *ibid*, p. 84.

wonder. Soon they fell and, appointing Mubariz Khan as his deputy in the Deccan, Nizam-ul-Mulk left for Delhi where in a grand Durbar held early in 1722, he found himself invested with the office of Prime Minister. This too, however, could not give him peace, for to his chagrin he soon discovered in Delhi that the Emperor's mistress, Koki, had a great influence over the affairs. From the Deccan he also received the unhappy news of the evil intentions of Mubariz Khan to declare his independence. Preferring the Deccan to Delhi, he marched towards the south, secured help from Raja Shahu who sent him a contingent of Maratha forces under the command of Balaji after signing an agreement with him with regard to their future relations; and at Shakar Khera about eighty miles from Aurangabad, he gave to Mubariz Khan "one of the decisive battles of India, deciding as it did the future of the political domination of the Deccan and laying the foundation of the State of Hyderabad. This battle established the virtual independence of the Nizam of Deccan."¹ Mubariz Khan met his death and was buried near the scene of the battle itself. This happened in 1724.

The alliance between Shahu and Nizam-ul-Mulk, however, was a marriage of convenience which was bound to break soon. Two swords could not find place in the same sheath, and when Nizam-ul-Mulk set about consolidating his power, he found himself at cross-purposes with Shahu. In vain did he espouse the cause of Sambhaji of Kolhapur and sent one expedition after another to the Carnatic to prevent Shahu from collecting the tribute from there. With the permission of Shahu, Peshwa Baji Rao marched against Nizam-ul-Mulk in August 1727. The latter was effectively humbled at Mungi Shevgaon in the hilly country of Palkhed where on 6 March 1728 he was forced to sign a convention² under which he promised (1) to abandon Sambhaji, (2) to pay the arrears and reinstate the revenue collectors of the Marathas from where they had been removed, and (3) to acknowledge Shahu as the Maratha King who would be entitled to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six provinces of the Deccan.

Nizam-ul-Mulk had promised to Sambhaji to get his claims and titles recognised by the Emperor, but abandoned by his ally, the latter suffered a complete defeat at the hands of Baji Rao at Vishalgad in 1730. After this the treaty of Warna was signed in 1731 which compelled Sambhaji to acknowledge the supremacy of Shahu.

All these achievements made Baji Rao's ambitions run riot. For a time the Emperor in Delhi tried to placate him and set him up against Nizam-ul-Mulk, but the condition that he forwarded for this were too difficult for Imperial authorities to accept. This

1. Yusuf Hussain, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 132.

2. Known as the convention of Mungi Shevgaon.

convinced the Emperor that he should rather befriend Nizam-ul-Mulk whom he invited to Delhi and gave him the sinews of war to march against Baji Rao. Baji Rao with his 80,000 men and Nizam-ul-Mulk with his 50,000 and a "well equipped train of artillery" which could strike an awe in the hearts of the Marathas,¹ met near Bhopal. But the Nizam's nerves failed him and he yielded victory to his opponent. He signed the convention of Duraj Sarai on 16 January 1738 under which the Peshwa secured for Shahu (1) the whole of Malwa together with sovereign rights over the territories that lay between the Narmada and the Chambal, and (2) a promise to get confirmation of the agreement and a reparation of fifty-lakhs of rupees from the Emperor.

We may agree with Yusuf Hussain, that Nadir Shah's invasion being just in the offing, probably the pressing messages of the Emperor to conclude peace and come back to Delhi made the Nizam do what he did.² But the prestige and position of Nizam-ul-Mulk, there is no doubt, was seriously compromised.

Nasir Jang, the son of Nizam-ul-Mulk, whom the latter had left in the Deccan as his deputy before he left for Delhi, proved better. After Nizam-ul-Mulk had moved to Delhi, Baji Rao set about with his 50,000 men to subdue the Deccan. But Nasir Jang with his 10,000 gave him a pitched battle on the banks of the Godawari which sent the Marathas reeling away from the battle-field. Ultimately peace between the two was concluded under which the Marathas renounced their claims on the revenues of the Deccan. Baji Rao had plumed himself upon his victories, and this defeat broke his heart so much that he would prefer taking poison than appearing before Shahu. Luckily death came to his rescue and he expired on 28 April 1740.

Nizam-ul-Mulk went back to Delhi. It is unnecessary once again to dilate upon Nadir Shah's invasion and discuss how under its impact the Imperial city went to rack and ruin. But the one fact that we need mention is that Nasir Jang's victory over the Marathas turned his head, and when Nizam-ul-Mulk returned it was now the turn of the son to write to him to go back to where he came from and leave the Deccan to him. It took some time before the rebellious son could be brought back to allegiance to the father.

CARNATIC BEFORE THE WAR

Thus as it is clear, of all the European powers it was the French alone who counted at the time. The British East India Company had just started developing its political hold over the Deccan. Of

1. Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas*, II, pp. 447, 48.

2. Yusuf Hussain, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

the Indian powers the Central Mughal authority over the Deccan was as good as dead. Nizam-ul-Mulk, the Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan, had established an independent authority, but he had a strong Maratha power to contend with. Besides, he had other difficulties to face in the Deccan.

Before we continue with the Nizam's story in the Deccan further, it must be made clear that when we talk of the Deccan we must not mistake it for the whole of Southern India. There were the states of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin which were completely outside it.

Carnatic was a narrow strip of territory along the coast having the sea on its east, and it was separated by a chain of mountains from Mysore in the west. On its north its boundary was the river Gundlakamma, while in the south of it lay the territory of Tanjore which was a little Maratha jagir that had been established by them in the seventeenth century when they advanced into the Carnatic. Further south, there were several other petty principalities, one of them being Trichinopoly which had established itself towards the close of the sixteenth century as a result of the break-up of the Empire of Vijayanagar. In 1736 a Hindu widow ruled this feeble State.

The Carnatic itself was under a Governor who was subordinate to the Viceroy of the Deccan. But just as Nizam-ul-Mulk had made his position hereditary, Saadatullah Khan the Nawab of the Carnatic also having no son of his own, took private permission of the Mughal Emperor, Mohammad Shah, and appointed his nephew Dost Ali as his successor without consulting Nizam-ul-Mulk.

On the Coromandel coast, besides, there were three important cities which belonged to the Europeans, i.e., Nagapatam which was under the Dutch, Pondicherry that belonged to the French, and Madras which was a possession of the English.

We have already traced in the first chapter the development of the French power on the coast till 1740. Pondicherry originally had been a little village named Puducheri which the French settlers enlarged, beautified and made a centre of their activities.

Towards the close of the 17th century Madras was a town inhabited by as many as 300,000 people. Before the First Carnatic War commenced it had three divisions - one was in the south which counted about fifty European houses, mainly English. One of these houses was that of the chief of the factory. And they had two churches, one of them being Catholic. "All these were within the enclosure called Fort St. George. That somewhat pompous title represented merely a slender wall, defended by four bastions and as many batteries, and with no outworks to defend them." The northern portion of the city was inhabited by the Armenian and Indian

merchants, while further north lay the suburb where the poorer Indians lived.¹

To come back to the Carnatic, Nawab Saadatullah died in 1732 and was succeeded by Dost Ali. The latter, however, failed to put his shoulders to the wheel and left everything in the hands of his son Safdar Ali, and his son-in-law and Diwan Chanda Sahib. Reckless in their ambitions, in 1736 when the ruler of Trichinopoly died Safdar Ali and Chanda Sahib marched their forces over that State and captured it. The widowed queen of Trichinopoly is said to have fallen in love with Chanda Sahib who remained there as the governor while Safdar Ali returned to Arcot.

The occupation of Trichinopoly opened the flood-gates of the destructive forces that threatened to engulf the Carnatic. Mir Asad, the newly appointed Diwan in place of Chanda Sahib, began "to insinuate charges of ambition against his predecessor."¹ The Marathas were enraged at the extinction of a Hindu principality, more so when instigated by Nizam-ul-Mulk. Nizam-ul-Mulk's mind had been exercised ever since the governorship of Carnatic had become hereditary without his permission, but he himself had been too busy elsewhere to do anything in this regard. So the Marathas marched into Carnatic under the leadership of Raghuji Bhonsle and Fateh Singh in May 1740. Dost Ali was defeated and slain at Damal Cherue; his Diwan, Mir Asad was taken prisoner; while Safdar Ali who was coming to their help, went back to Vellore. Marching ahead, the Marathas occupied Arcot and forced a treaty upon Safdar Ali who undertook (1) to pay an indemnity of 40 lakhs of rupees, and (2) to pay a regular *chauth* to them. On the other hand the Marathas recognised him as the new Nawab of Carnatic and promised to get Trichinopoly released from Chanda Sahib, whom he now considered his rival.

The Marathas fulfilled their last promise and on 26 March 1741, they secured the surrender of Chanda Sahib who was carried away to Satara as a prisoner. But Safdar Ali gained nothing, for the Marathas left behind Murari Rao Ghorepade with a garrison of 14,000 troops to govern Trichinopoly on their own behalf.

By this time the French city of Pondicherry had been fully fortified by its governor M. Dumas, so much so that considering it impregnable both Chanda Sahib and Safdar Ali had sent their families thither before the crisis with the Marathas precipitated. This was bound to have an undesirable effect over the morals of the Indian people. Yet more so, when during the siege-operations of Trichinopoly the Marathas demanded a payment of 60 lakhs of rupees and the surrender of Chanda Sahib's family by M. Dumas, they

1. Malleson, *Lord Clive*, pp. 9-11

2. *ibid.*

received a significant as well as interesting reply: "Our country, France, produces neither gold nor silver; that which we bring with us to buy merchandise comes to us from foreign countries. Our country produces only iron and soldiers whom we know how to employ against those who molest us unjustly."¹

Safdar Ali did not feel secure at defenceless Arcot. He had therefore already sent away his family for safety, and now himself moved to the strong fortress of Vellore to live with Murtiza Ali, the husband of his sister. There, however, Murtiza Ali proved treacherous and Safdar Ali was first poisoned and soon thereafter stabbed to death. Murtiza was proclaimed the new Nawab, but he could not remain so for long. Public opinion was aroused against his foul play and he had to effect his escape from Arcot in woman's clothes. Safdar Ali's son, Saiyud Muhammad Khan, who at this time was at Madras, was proclaimed by the army as the new Nawab.

It was under these circumstances that Nizam-ul-Mulk now decided to march to Carnatic at the head of 2,00,000 foot and 80,000 horse to restore his shattered authority. He was not only able to expel the Marathas from Trichinopoly, but also cleared them from Carnatic; and refusing to recognise Saiyud Muhammad Khan, he appointed his commander-in-chief, Khwaja Abdullah as Nawab. Thereafter he went back to Golkonda.

The Khwaja, however, could never assume the reins of his new office. He had accompanied Nizam-ul-Mulk back to Golkonda, and the morning he was to start for Carnatic, he was found dead in his bed. Some say it was a death from joy, but some blame Anwar-ud-din, a distinguished soldier of the Nizam, who was appointed as the next Nawab.

By this time, however, the Nizam had sensed that the appointment of Anwar-ud-din was bound to be unpopular in Carnatic. He therefore proclaimed that Anwar-ud-din would hold office only till Saiyud Muhammad arrived to the age of manhood. Till that time Anwar would act as his guardian.

Soon, however, yet another tragedy took place. Saiyud Muhammad shortly after his arrival at Arcot, went to preside at a marriage where people saw a dagger plunged into his heart. The man who did it was supposed to be an agent of Murtiza Ali, the murderer of his father. But Anwar-ud-din was also blamed. Nizam-ul-Mulk rebuked him for his negligence, yet he could not find anybody else to hold the charge of the office. Anwar-ud-din was therefore confirmed as the Nawab of Carnatic.

1. Martineau, *Dupleix et l'Inde Française*, II p. 22—quoted by Yusuf Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 209

It was at this juncture in 1744 that the news of the commencement of the Austrian War of Succession came to India. In this war England and France found themselves in opposite camps. The involvements of the home countries in Europe could not fail to influence the mutual relationship of their trading companies in India.

This was the time when confusion reigned supreme in Delhi. The rising Maratha power though weakened by internal dissensions, still was strong enough to make this confusion worse confounded. Nizam-ul-Mulk in the Deccan had defied Delhi, but he was not strong enough to face the Marathas and at the same time to assert his authority over Carnatic. And so far as Carnatic itself was concerned, the political chaos that had plagued it made it unfit to assert its moral and political authority over the European interests. In these circumstances came the news of the Austrian War of Succession which burst in India into the First Carnatic War.

EVENTS OF THE WAR

About four years before the first Carnatic war had commenced, a French squadron under La Bourdonnais had been sent to the Indian waters to operate against the British in the event of a war which seemed imminent. But since the crisis did not precipitate, the squadron was recalled to Mauritius from where it had come. The result was that at the time the war actually broke out the French had no ships of war in the Indian waters. Alarmed by the situation, M. Dupleix who had been appointed Governor of Pondicherry in October 1741, appealed to Morse, the Governor of Madras, that although their home countries were at war against each other in Europe, in India they should remain neutral. In reply Morse is said to have agreed to the proposal, but at the same time he "warned Dupleix that they would have no control over King's ships that might arrive."¹

At the time Morse gave this warning to Dupleix, he was actually expecting a strong British squadron under Commodore Barnett to appear off Madras at any moment. Barnett, as he appeared in the India waters, "intercepted and captured the French *Merchantmen*² together with some richly laden vessels. Dupleix appealed to Anwar-ud-din, the Nawab of Carnatic, to ask the British to desist from hostilities. The Nawab wrote to the British with the result that Barnett took no further step against the French.

Soon, however, the situation changed. Just as Dupleix was making his efforts to keep peace with the British in India, he called on La Bourdonnais at Mauritius to come to his aid immediately. La

1. *Cambridge History of India*, (1963), V. p. 120.

2. Malleson, *Lord Clive*, p. 23

Bourdonnais soon reached the Indian waters with eight warships. On the other hand, Barnett died in April 1746 to be succeeded in the command of the British squadron by Peyton who was supposed to be an unenterprising seaman. Barnett had only four ships of war the best of which, *Medway*, sprung a leak. Besides, the Indian climate had told heavily on his men, and his ships having been absent from the dockyard for a long time, were rather in a weak position generally.

As Peyton heard La Bourdonnais approach the Indian waters, he proceeded to intercept him and cruised off Nagapatam. The two squadrons fought on the afternoon of 6 July 1746 and the morning of the 7th. In these actions, however, Peyton failed to make any impression and sailed away for safety to the Hoogli to await the arrival of a reinforcement. The French squadron left with the honours of the day, anchored off Pondicherry on the evening of 8 July.

Determined to take advantage of the situation, the French fleet appeared before the undefended town of Madras on 15 September. A besieging force of 1,100 European soldiers, a large number of whom had been taken out of the ships and some Indian and African recruits, summoned Moise, the Governor of Madras to surrender.

As the French were preparing for an offensive now Moise took his turn and appealed to Nawab Anwar-ud-din for help. But probably because no presents accompanied the appeal, the Nawab did not respond till the French actually appeared before Madras. Now he sent Dupleix a warning which the latter conveniently ignored. When the warning was repeated, Dupleix coolly replied that he was trying to capture Madras so as to deliver it into the hands of the Nawab himself.

In the meanwhile the action against Madras continued, with the result that after getting two of their Englishmen and four of the others killed, the British signed their capitulation with the French on 21 September under which the English should surrender themselves as prisoners of war, that the town should be immediately delivered up; but that it should be afterwards ransomed.¹

The fall of Madras into the hands of the French has been attributed to several causes. There is no doubt that the defence of Madras had never been built to face a siege, yet the wit and wisdom exhibited by the English leaders would deserve anything but praise. In this connection the part played by Peyton may definitely be criticised, more particularly when we learn that much of the besieging force of the French at Madras came only from their ships. Had Peyton been courageous enough just to stay upon the coast even

¹ Osm. *History of the Most Interesting Transaction of the British Nation in Indostan*, I, pp. 58-69.

without any attempt to fight, the French should not have found it easy to desert their ships.

Be that as it may, the capture of Madras instead of making the French happy, rather brought about a clash between Dupleix and La Bourdonnais. For the latter, true to his agreement, wanted to permit the British to ransom the city, while the former wished it to be retained by the French. In this clash Prof. Dodwell has refused to recognise any national interest which may have been at stake. According to him, "the question was really, who was to make money out of Madras?"¹ But the following words of Dupleix which were addressed to La Bourdonnais definitely convey a different impression: "... in the name of God; in the name of your children, of your wife ... Let us then profit by our opportunity, for the glory of our monarch, and for the general interests of a nation which will regard you as its restorer in India."²

The arguments between the two French leaders were prolonged, and when they could not decide the matter between themselves, nature came to their assistance. Suddenly a terrific storm broke out on the coast which crippled the French fleet and compelled La Bourdonnais to sail for the islands, leaving behind a considerable number of soldiers who now passed under the control of Dupleix. Thus left master of the situation, the latter refused to return Madras to the British.

In the meanwhile, the fall of Madras took Nawab Anwar ud-din by surprise who now demanded that the city should be handed over to him as promised. Dupleix temporised with him, with the result that the Nawab sent a force of 10,000 men under the command of his eldest son Mahfuz Khan to enforce compliance to his wishes. Here now, however, a development took place which gave a completely new turn to the European activities in India.

The Nawab's forces blockaded Fort St. George, but soon the French made a sally under La Tour and administered a severe blow on their assailants compelling them to retire to St. Thome. Paradis brought a reinforcement. The entire army of Mahfuz Khan attempted to bar his progress on the banks of the river Adyar. Only 230 European and about 7,000 Indian soldiers were all that Paradis had at that time. But he made his men gallantly wade through the breast-high water and deliver an attack. A terrible slaughter was witnessed on the army of Mahfuz Khan and it was unceremoniously hustled out of the French way.

The battle of Adyar has a great significance in the history of the growth of European political power in India. First, as a result

1. *The Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 121.

2. Quoted by Malleon, *History of the French in India*, p. 144.

of the French success in this battle. the terror of the Indian princes vanished. Secondly, the European military system, under which a full reliance was placed over infantry supported by artillery, definitely demonstrated its superiority over that of the Indian princes which depended mainly on the cavalry. And thirdly, "It brought into view, silently but surely, the possibility of the conquest of India by one or other of the two European powers on the Coromandel coast."¹

To come back to Madras. its capture encouraged Dupleix in his designs to annihilate the British power on the Coromandel coast. Some sixteen miles to the south of Pondicherry was another small fort of the British, named Fort St. David. Eighteen months after the fall of Madras, Dupleix tried to capture it, but in vain. The Nawab's forces were preparing to assist the British. but they were weaned away by Dupleix who agreed to have the Nawab's flag hoisted over Fort St. George for a week after which the Nawab would issue a written order to graciously make over the town to the French. The Nawab was also to receive presents from the French to the value of 40,000 rupees. As a result of all this the Nawab's proposed help to the British was withdrawn. But even then the French failed in taking the Fort St. David.

The departure of La Bourdonnais had in fact made a material difference to the situation. The arrival of a new British commander. Griffin, also helped the British to recover from their feebleness. In this manner the year 1747 passed, as also did the year 1748 till the month of June when Bouvet appeared with a French squadron to land treasure at Madras. He, however, refused to give a battle to Griffin who lay before Pondicherry to prevent the French from landing there.

A large British expedition under the command of Rear-Admiral Boscawen appeared in the Indian waters early in August to avenge the English insult at the hands of the French. Pondicherry was besieged. But thanks to their defective strategy and inefficient leadership, here again the British failed to revert the misfortune that they were dogged by. Boscawen raised the siege and retired to Fort St. David leaving once again the honours of the war to the French.

At St. David Boscawen was making preparations for one more attempt to take Pondicherry when the news arrived that England and France had concluded peace in Europe by signing the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748). Under this treaty the British and the French were to cease their hostilities in India forthwith, and the French were to return Madras to the British in return for Louisburg in North America which was to be restored to the French. The work of Boscawen was thus completed and he sailed back home.

1. Malleon, *Lord of the*, p. 26.

But the First Carnatic War was not fought in vain. The peace restored in 1748 was very much different from the peace of 1744. In 1744 the Nawab of Carnatic was still an overlord and the British and the French on the Coromandel coast his liegemen. But now there was no need for the British to pay for Madras the *quit-rent* which they renounced in 1752. Secondly, the magic spell of the oriental military power was completely shattered and the awe which the Indian princes previously inspired in the European hearts, now ceased to exist. Then, the superiority of the European methods of military discipline and infantry over cavalry having been demonstrated as we have already seen, it inspired the foreigners to enter into greater adventures to gain political power in India which was fast escaping the Mughal hands. Fourthly, the circumstances had forced La Bourdonnais to leave behind a large number of trained soldiers when he sailed away from the Indian waters. Dupleix who had learnt how he could play a decisive role in the Indian affairs, got an opportunity with the help of these men to realise his ambitions. Fifthly, as a result of this war the French established their reputation as great fighters, though the gains made by them were completely lost when they were compelled to restore Madras to the British. And lastly, between the French and the British, it was clearly demonstrated that the ultimate success would follow only him who was powerful at sea.

9

The Second Carnatic War, 1749-1754

THE CIRCUMSTANCES

The First Carnatic War had exhausted the resources both of the French and the British trading companies in India. Now, therefore, both wanted peace. But war or peace, it is not entirely in the control of man to have either of them as he wishes. In fact the peace between the two powers had not yet been concluded when nature set itself at preparing the ground for yet another clash between the two.

During the First Carnatic War, both the European powers had enhanced their military strength by raising troops locally and by getting bodies of them from Europe. After the War was over it was not found easy to disband the local recruits in whose training and equipment they had spent fortunes, while the European soldiers could be sent back home only during the shipping season which was quite some time ahead. Both the powers, therefore, got anxious to place their troops at the disposal of the Indian princes if they themselves could be relieved of the expense.

On the other hand, the things were developing in such a way that the Indian princes themselves, thanks to their mutual jealousies and contest for power, could not help appealing to the foreigners for help. The pace in this connection was set by Tanjore, followed by Carnatic, and then by the Nawab of the Deccan himself.

Tanjore had been conquered by Shivaji's father Shahji who had conferred it on his brother Venkaji. Venkaji was followed by his son Tukaji on the throne of Tanjore. The latter died in 1738 survived by his two legitimate sons, Baba Sahib and Shahji, and a third son named Partab Singh who was his offspring by a concubine. Baba Sahib succeeded his father Tukaji but died soon and was succeeded by his brother Shahji. The latter, however, proved a failure in the state craft with the result that Pratab Singh set him aside and occupied the throne for himself in 1741.

Within Tanjore was a small place known as Devikottai which lay at the mouth of the Coleroon and the possession of which would enable a foreign power to control a part of the river which was quite navigable, together with all the trade that was carried through it. Devikottai captured the imagination of the British and they offered to help Shahji against Pratab Singh on the condition that the former would surrender this place to them after he got back his throne. The agreement was signed, and in April 1749 a British expedition led by Captain Cope appeared before Devikottai, though it failed to secure its purpose. The second British expedition appeared under Major Lawrence and Pratab Singh agreed on 23 June to surrender to the British Devikottai together with certain surrounding territory which would fetch them an annual revenue of 36,000 rupees. Devikottai having been secured, nobody bothered for Shahji who was granted a small pension and kept by the British under their surveillance at Madras. The occupation of Devikottai by the British set a precedence which was soon followed by the French in the Court of Hyderabad, as also in Carnatic.

During the First Carnatic War neither the British nor the French had ever overlooked the necessity to strengthen their respective influence in the court of Nizam-ul-Mulk and to win his support. The French sent their agent Ghulam Imam Hussain who was able to develop a pronounced pro-French tendency in the Nizam. On the other hand the British sent their agent Mutyalu Nariyak who was able to influence Nasir Jang, the son of Nizam-ul-Mulk, in their favour. The story, however, ended soon when Nizam-ul-Mulk died in 1748, the year in which peace was concluded between the British and the French under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Nizam-ul-Mulk was succeeded by his son Nasir Jang who had a powerful army of 70,000 men under his command which was an eyesore to Safdar Jang, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh. Within Hyderabad too his position did not go uncontested. Muzaffar Jang, a nephew of Nasir Jang and the grandson of Nizam-ul-Mulk, who was the Governor of Bijapur and Adoni, conspired against his uncle. He was able to win the support of Safdar Jang for his cause; certain other small powers, together with some influential nobles of Hyderabad also offered him their secret support. But he was not content. Here was a chance for the French to avail

Down in the Carnatic also the things were maturing to merit the attention of the French. Chanda Sahib whom, as we have already seen, the Marathas had taken away as a prisoner to Poona in 1741, was set free early in 1748. No sooner was Chanda Sahib released than he started establishing secret contacts with Muzaffar Jang to help him replace Nasir Jang at Hyderabad, while he himself would be helped to supplant Anwar-ud-din in the Carnatic. Duplex also had some old scores to settle with the Nawab of Carnatic for his having helped the British during the siege of Pondicherry. In

these circumstances it was not difficult for a triple alliance to precipitate. The three parties joined their forces which numbered 38,400 and gave Anwar-ud-din a battle at Ambur. The latter was defeated and slain on 3 August 1748, while his son Mahfuz Khan was taken prisoner.

After this victory Muzaffar Jang declared himself the Nizam of the Deccan, while he nominated Chanda Sahib as the Nawab of the Carnatic. Dupleix was rewarded with the grant of the territories of Villianallur and Bahur, together with the island of Divy and the province of Masulipatam on the coast of Orissa.

Anwar-ud-din had been slain and his son Mahfuz Khan taken prisoner. But the story of this family did not yet end. Mohammad Ali, another son of Anwar-ud-din, escaped to Trichinopoly where he started making preparations to get back the throne of the Carnatic. Here now was an opportunity for the British to assist him and also to make a common cause with Nasir Jang, for they were sure if the gains which the French had made went unchecked, they must ultimately make an attempt to annihilate the British power in this country. Already in reply to the grants secured by Dupleix, the British had occupied St. Thome which lay less than four miles from Madras and the possession of which was vital for them, for Dupleix had claimed it on behalf of Chanda Sahib. This is what prepared the ground for the Second Carnatic War between the French and the British in India, though their home countries were at peace with each other in Europe.

The War

When Mohammad Ali took refuge in the fort of Trichinopoly, it was not properly garrisoned or provisioned. The remnant of the Carnatic troops which he had with him, having just arrived from Ambur, were not in an exhilarating condition either. The British soldiers who came from Madras to join him, were only a handful in number. It was not difficult in these circumstances to secure the surrender of Trichinopoly if Chanda Sahib had immediately marched against it as he was exhorted by Dupleix. But the former thought it better to march upon Tanjore first and persuaded the French also to this end, with the hope that they would be able to secure a large tribute from that State for their maintenance.

The forces of the French and Chanda Sahib were thus misdirected. Tanjore, encouraged by the British and hoping to receive help from Nasir Jang, kept its enemies engaged for as long as three months. And when ultimately the Raja of Tanjore agreed to pay to the allies an amount of 7,000,000 rupees, the news arrived that Nasir Jang had appeared on the borders of the Carnatic. The siege of Tanjore had to be raised, while Trichinopoly went on gathering strength. The British also took advantage of the situation and helped

themselves by occupying Tiruvendipuram near Cuddalore. All this happened early in 1750.

Thus the situation took yet another turn. Nasir Jang had under his command a huge army which was also supported by the English who joined him under the command of Captain Cope. Towards the end of March 1750, the two armies faced each other on the banks of the Jinji. But before the battle could commence, on the night of 4 April some thirteen¹ French officers fled in panic to Pondicherry and Muzaffar Jang threw himself at the mercy of his uncle Nasir Jang who took him a prisoner. Content with this gain, Nasir Jang retired to Arcot where for a period of six months he kept on enjoying ease and complacency.

Dupleix, however, was a different type. He was not prepared to reconcile to such a humiliating condition. He started re-organising his army and strengthening his resources. He occupied Tiruviti and Villupuram and on 12 September 1750, the French troops under the command of Bussy, wrested from Mohammad Ali the fort of Jinji which was hitherto supposed as impregnable. This shook the Nizam Nasir Jang from his slumber and he decided to take the warnings of Mohammad Ali and the British which had so far been given him in vain. But it was now too late.

Before Nasir Jang moved out of Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic, the diplomacy of Dupleix was already at work in his own court as well. Dupleix had already won the secret sympathies for Muzaffar Jang, of some of the Nizam's nobles including the Nawabs of Cuddapah, Karnul and Savanur. And as the battle between the opposing armies started, some of the Nizam's troops deserted him. The confusion that followed, helped the Nawab of Cuddapah who secretly attacked Nasir Jang and put him to death. Muzaffar Jang was forthwith released and proclaimed as the Nizam of the Deccan in December 1750.

It was indeed a great victory for Dupleix. "Muzaffar Jang was invited to Pondicherry, which he entered in the same palanquin with Dupleix. Next day's Durbar was a riot of noise and colour, of kettle drums, elephants, flags, jewels, canopies and tapestries. Dupleix was given a robe of honour, titles, a fortress and villages, and a jagir (estate) of 10,000 rupees. He was appointed Nawab of the lands between the Kistna and Cape Comorin, with Chanda Sahib under him as Nawab of Arcot. The vast treasure accumulated during Nizam-ul-Mulk's long and profitable career was lavishly distributed to the deserving. Dupleix himself was said to have received £200,000 in cash, as well as many valuable jewels."²

1 *The Cambridge History of India*, V p. 177

2 Thomson, F.D. and Garratt, G.T., *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, (1962), p. 74

Dupleix had secured a resounding success, and its one significance was that the British would now have to live in Madras only under the supremacy of the French. Floyer, the British Governor of Fort St. David, probably did not comprehend the steady rise of the French power, or what is generally believed, he was incapable of reacting to it in a daring manner, with the result that he had rather sent his congratulations to Chanda Sahib when the latter became the new Nawab of Carnatic after the battle of Ambur.

Soon, however, the situation took yet another turn. On 28 September 1750 Saunders, a more capable man had replaced Floyer and he was now watching the situation more carefully. Mohammad Ali had been saved from an immediate attack, he had gained time and was re-inforced by the British. On the other hand, a lucky development for the British took place in the camp of Muzaffar Jang who requested Dupleix to send with him for his security some French soldiers to Hyderabad. Bussy, the French soldier was deputed for the purpose and he left for the Deccan on 15 January 1751. In this manner the French forces which could be employed against Mohammad Ali, were reduced. Mazaffar Jang himself did not live long after succeeding Nasir Jang, for he was soon murdered by the same group of people who had done his predecessor to death. Bussy acted promptly and placed Salabat Jang, a brother of Nasir Jang on the throne. The latter rewarded the French suitably by further grants of property, and territory, and made it yet more necessary for them to keep their forces in Hyderabad.

All this helped the British. For when Dupleix ultimately decided to take Trichinopoly he was in a weaker position than before and the British were strong. The situation for the British, however, still was desperate. For when Chanda Sahib decided to take Trichinopoly, he massed nearly all his available troops and was assisted by as many as 900 Frenchmen ; while Mohammad Ali, on the other hand, had only about 5,000 soldiers of his own who had not more than 600 Englishmen to help them. Trichinopoly in these circumstances was not expected to resist for long, while its fall, without any doubt, would invite the victorious armies to open the flood-gates of their attack on Madras which at the time was but poorly defended. All minds on the side of the British were depressed.

But here now appeared Clive, a genius, who grasped the whole situation as none else did. He proposed to Saunders that the only chance for Trichinopoly, and therefore also for Madras, lay in attacking Arcot which lay completely denuded of all reliable men who could defend it. This would compel the enemy to raise their siege of Trichinopoly, or at least to reduce their pressure against it so that they could prevent Arcot from falling into the British hands. The proposal was worth a trial, and Saunders immediately accepted it, leaving the responsibility for its execution to Clive himself.

Clive set forth from St. David on 26 August 1751, with only 200 English and 300 Indian soldiers under his command. He had only three small field-pieces with him, while of "his eight officers, four were volunteers from the civil service who, with two of the others, had never been under fire." Clive "reached the vicinity of Arcot on the 31st, surprised the fort, and compelled the town to surrender, without losing a single man."¹

Clive had accomplished a marvellous feat and it brought about its reaction almost instantaneously. As the news of the event spread the fair weather friends started collecting round the British and Mohammad Ali. Several petty princes who ruled the territories between Trichinopoly and the eastern coast, Murari Rao, a famous Maratha chief, the raja of Mysore and the ruler of Tanjore—all entered the field to support Mohammad Ali. On the other hand Chanda Sahib had immediately to despatch 3,000 of his best soldiers under the command of his son Raja Sahib to take back Arcot. They were helped by 150 Frenchmen. "The siege began on the 23rd of September. It was characterised by extraordinary tenacity, great daring infinite powers of resource on the part of Clive and the defenders. The sepoys vied with the English alike in courage and in capacity to withstand fatigue, hunger and thirst. Their self-denial, displayed when they insisted that the water which was brought to them under much hardship should be offered first to their European comrades, went the round of the world," Little wonder, the besiegers ultimately withdrew in humiliation and disappeared in the direction of Vellore.²

Clive's victory, however, was still not complete. Raja Sahib, while retiring from Arcot, had been re-inforced by French forces from Pondicherry and thus strengthened took post at Arni which lay about seventeen miles to the south of Arcot. To humble Raja Sahib further Clive set out from Arcot, and joined by Murari Rao with his 1,000 Maratha troopers, he took Timeri and suddenly appeared before Arni. Here again the contest was very much unequal, Clive fighting almost the double of his numbers. His gallantry and excellently fitted moves, however, paid him well again and the enemy ultimately dispersed leaving behind about 50 Frenchmen and 150 Indian soldiers killed or wounded. Clive, on the other hand, lost a total number of not more than 60 soldiers.

All these successful exploits of Clive not only earned him a great name and fame, but also a large number of soldiers who now deserted Raja Sahib and joined his victorious army. The ruler of Arni also promised to come out for Mohammad Ali. After this Clive captured Kanchipuram, and then garrisoning Arcot well, he retired to Madras to be welcomed and honoured by the Governor Saunders at Fort St. David.

1 Malleison, *Lord Clive* (Indian Reprint), pp 39, 40.

2. *ibid* , pp. 41-42

One stage of his war-like activities having been completed, Clive now prepared for the second. French General Law had been besieging Trichinopoly along with Chanda Sahib. In vain did Dupleix try continuously to impress upon him the idea that he should press on for his success at that place without paying any heed to the developments taking place at Arcot or elsewhere. For the same daring spirit did not animate Law as did Dupleix. The result was that Dupleix started thinking of some alternative plan to counter the gains which Clive had made. The British had divided and humbled the forces of their opponents by capturing Arcot and Dupleix now decided to pay them in the same coin by attacking Madras.

Dupleix persuaded Raja Sahib to follow his scheme. The latter raised some fresh troops and joined by 400 French soldiers suddenly attacked and took the town of Punamalai lying about 13 miles south-west of Madras. From here they could have easily marched on Madras and taken it, for it was not at the time garrisoned by more than a hundred men. But they once again committed a tactical mistake similar to the one they had committed when they did not take Trichinopoly just at the time it was occupied by Mohammad Ali, and decided rather to coerce the northern Arcot which would force the British to abandon Trichinopoly. For this purpose they occupied Kanchipuram and then marched to Vandalur from where Madras lay about 25 miles to the north.

Clive was at this time at Fort St. David where he and Saunders prepared so that the former should be able to march to the relief of Trichinopoly. But when the disquieting news of the fresh moves of the enemy reached them, they changed their plans. Urgent message to Bengal brought some troops from there, four-fifths of those garrisoning Arcot were also called out, and Clive marched towards Vandalur forthwith. The enemy, however, left the place before Clive arrived, and marched in the direction of Arcot encamping on the way at Kaveripak, only 10 miles to the east of their destination. Clive reaching Vandalur, soon left it in the hot pursuit of the enemy. He reached Kaveripak before the enemy could make any further move. Once again a sanguinary battle was fought in which Clive suffered a loss of seventy men, while his enemy suffered fifty killed and 300 wounded before it disappeared. As a consequence the northern Arcot was cleared of the enemy and Clive retired once again to Fort St. David.

After this the only move now left for Clive was to march to the relief of Trichinopoly. Soon Stringer Lawrence, Clive's senior, arrived from England and took command of the force with Clive as next to him in command. They now marched towards Trichinopoly. The French tried to intercept them, but they were ultimately able to fight their way through to join Mohammad Ali.

This success of the British and the fact of the several petty princes together with that of Mysore¹ having joined Mohammad Ali, demoralised Law who moved back to the island of Seringham. Paichanda, a fortified pagoda on the northern bank of the Coleroon formed the gateway through which Seringham could communicate with the country. In a bid to cut off this communication Clive marched to capture the pagoda. On his way thither he occupied Semiaveram, Mutachanellur and Lalgudi and should have soon taken Paichanda as well when M. d'Auteuil sent by Dupleix to the relief of Law, appeared in Utatur which was only 15 miles away from Clive's headquarters at Semiaveram. Clive had to effect a hasty retreat to the latter place. Clive was still at Semiaveram when Law despatched a body of men through Paichanda and took Clive by surprise by falling upon him during a night. A desperate situation was created, but cool and composed Clive met it and secured the surrender of his assailants. After this he easily occupied Paichanda, marched on Utatur from where d'Auteuil retreated to Volkonda. Clive continued the pursuit of the enemy to the latter place and forced d'Auteuil also to surrender on 29 May 1752. On 1 June Law followed suit together with his 600 men, whereafter the whole besieging army together with Chanda Sahib laid down its arms. One unhappy feature of this whole drama however, was that shortly after his surrender, Chanda Sahib confided in the Raja of Tanjore who got him beheaded.²

Clive sailed for England in 1753. The Directors lionised him and in appreciation of his services presented him with a jewelled sword.³ Back in India, however it still took some time before the Second Carnatic War came to a close. The last shot of this war still remained to be fired.

Dupleix was still not reconciled to his fate. Though he received instructions from home to bring the hostilities to a close, he wanted to continue with them at least for some time more in the hope that he would get an opportunity to retrieve the French prestige. The desired opportunity soon offered itself though the fate was too much against him to enable him to use it fully to his advantage.

The opportunity came when the British claimed Trichinopoly for themselves while Mohammad Ali excused himself saying he had promised it to Nanjaraj the Regent of Mysore in return for the help

1 As already discussed.

2 See Mill, *History of India*, III, pp. 123-4. Mill blames Lawrence for his indifference towards the fate of Chanda Sahib whom, if he desired, he could have taken in his own custody. But he does not make it clear as to why Lawrence should have doubted the man in whom Chanda Sahib himself did confide.

3 Clive, however, graciously declined saying it was Lawrence who deserved the honour first.

the latter had rendered during the siege of the town. Dupleix had by this time been reinforced by 500 soldiers recently arrived from France, and was further strengthened when as a result of his untiring efforts spread over about six months he was able to secure the desertion of Murari Rao from the British cause. He was therefore in a position now to offer his help to Nanjraj if he desired to assert his claims, provided he paid the whole expense of the French troops till the fall of Trichinopoly and pay Dupleix a sum of 3,000,000 rupees thereafter. The final agreement having been reached, the confederate forces besieged Trichinopoly once again.

But Dupleix was not served by the spirited military officers as Saunders had the privilege of being served. In vain did he put Saussay Maissin, Astruc and Mainville in command of the French forces one after another. Despite their success here and there—particularly that of Mainville—they all proved to be a dismal failure. Nor was Dupleix lucky enough to have allies on whom he could depend. Nanjraj, the Mysorean commandant joined the French more in search of plunder than in that of any lasting honour for his State, and no sooner had he joined than he started talking of going back to Mysore and Murari Rao, if he could desert the British, could be relied upon to be faithless to the French as well. On the other hand Lawrence who commanded the British troops, was steadfast and composed. A reverse or two could not unnerve him, and the fortunes also seemed to be in his favour when he saw before him the confederacy breaking up. The *coup de grace* to the French was given when the news arrived that Godeheu had landed at Pondicherry on 1 August 1754 and superseded Dupleix on the 2nd. Dupleix had been recalled to France for his war-like activities, and Godeheu sent to conclude peace with the British. In October the truce between the two European powers was made to be followed in December 1754, by a provisional treaty subject to confirmation from Europe. And this brought the Second Carnatic War to a close.

Under the terms of the Treaty, the two parties were to renounce for the future all Muslim offices and dignities. Secondly, they were now not to interfere in the disputes of the local powers. Thirdly, their mutual territorial possessions were defined and fourthly the navigation of certain rivers was regulated between the two.

The terms of the treaty which is known as the Treaty of Pondicherry are extremely significant. If it is asserted that the British Empire in India was never the result of a design, there could never be a better proof of it than this. From the French point of view the terms of the Treaty were indeed disgraceful and one may agree with the remarks of Dupleix that Godeheu "signed the ruin of the country and the dishonour of the nation."¹ For the commitment, that the

1 Malleson, *French in India*, p. 423.

French would renounce together with the British all the offices and dignities that they had secured in India, amounted to renouncing with one stroke of the pen all that Dupleix had gained. On the other hand all that the British aimed at getting by war, they gained by a stroke of luck which brought them the first term of the Treaty. Mohammad Ali, by this term, was not now to be interfered with and Mysore's claims remained unfulfilled which meant the British influence in Carnatic was to remain unhampered.

The French Government in Paris, however, did not consider the treaty a disgrace. For the territories guaranteed under the treaty to the French were to fetch an annual income of eight lakhs as against those of the British which were not worth more than a lakh per annum. Moreover at the time Godeheu arrived in Pondicherry, the French treasury was almost empty. Their allies were deserting them one after another and their military officers were not capable of delivering the goods. In these circumstances if they had not raised the siege of Trichinopoly as they did, they should have been compelled to do so under humiliation. Moreover, disputes "were already arising between the French and the English on the Ohio and Mississippi; the preservation of that region seemed more important than speculative conquests in India, and this constituted another motive for not endangering the peace for the sake of Asiatic domains which after four years of war Dupleix had not succeeded in subduing."¹

THE FRENCH IN HYDERABAD

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that as a result of the Treaty of Pondicherry the French suffered a diplomatic defeat in Carnatic at the hands of the British. But in Hyderabad the things were different. Here by sheer diplomacy and cool contemplations the French commander Bussy made gains which not only aroused the jealousy and envy of the British, but also suggested to them the way by which they ultimately reached the pinnacle of power in this country.

After the murder of Muzaffar Jang on 14 February, 1751, Bussy brought his uncle Salabat Jang to power. To support his authority he marched the French forces to Aurangabad which lay on the opposite extremity of the Deccan more than nine hundred miles away from Pondicherry. By this act, he not only assumed to himself the role of a king-maker, but also carried the French banner to that distant place without firing a single shot. It was a marvellous feat which established the French supremacy over the whole of the Deccan overnight and which earned Bussy the gratitude of Dupleix.

It was for the first time that Dupleix had found a man who could be relied upon not only for courage, but also for diplomacy, persuasiveness and foresight. Little wonder Dupleix's imaginations became wild and no sooner had Bussy arrived at Aurangabad than he started designing a march to Bengal where Salabat Jang would be placed at the head of that province as he headed Deccan as well. The sudden attack of the Marathas on the Deccan however shattered his dreams and although this attack was ultimately repulsed and the French successfully signed peace with the Peshwa Balajirao on 17 January 1752, the march on Bengal could never again be contemplated.

The imagination of Dupleix was, however, rife, and he now matured an alternative scheme to use the troops of Salabat Jang against Trichinopoly while Bussy would attack Mysore in the rear. Here again, however, the fortunes refused to respond to his call. Because of the French support with which he had come, the influence of Salabat Jang began to wane fast. His nobles became rebellious and Diwan Ramdas Pandit was done to death. The French stood aghast when they later on discovered that the dead Diwan himself was in secret contact with the British in a bid to clear the French from the Deccan. Little wonder, that instead of thinking in tune with ambitious Dupleix, the far-sighted Bussy advised the pulling out of the French troops honourably from the Deccan as their task had been accomplished. Dupleix however advised him to continue and Bussy prepared to help him in his Trichinopoly scheme after reorganising the affairs of the Nizam.

Soon, however, another trouble arose when Ghazi-ud-din, a high officer of Delhi marched to conquer the Deccan for himself. Ghazi-ud-din, indeed, had prior claims to the position that Salabat Jang occupied. For he was the eldest son of Nizam-ul-Mulk, who had so far been kept busy in Delhi. This trouble too disappeared soon when one of his step mothers poisoned him. Now was the time for Dupleix to realise his ambitions against Trichinopoly and everything having been made ready, the Nizam's forces were ordered to march. But the fortunes were pitted against Dupleix and now the Hyderabad troops refused to oblige the French and rebelled against their command. The Trichinopoly plan had to be abandoned; Bussy once again advised pulling out from the Deccan and reported being seriously ill. Dupleix, however, rejected the proposal once again but permitted him to retire to Masulipatam till he recovered and reported back on duty in May 1753.

After returning to Hyderabad, Bussy effected yet another stroke of his masterly diplomacy. He met the Nizam at Aurangabad and secured from him the grant of the four Sarkars of Chicacole, Mustafanagar, Rajahmundry and Ellore. This was in lieu of 2,55,000 rupees—the annual expense of the French troops in the Deccan for

which Bussy had to depend on the mercy of the Nizam's nobles. The revenues of the newly acquired territories were expected to amount to about six lakhs more than the estimated expenditure. Besides, he was also able to secure the removal of the unfriendly nobles from important offices where now those were appointed from whom the French expected greater loyalty.

Bussy was busy strengthening the French position at Hyderabad when the news arrived that Dupleix had been replaced by Godeheu. This exercised a demoralising influence, for it raised suspicion in the minds of the friends of the French in the latter's claims that they had at their back the full support of their home government. Bussy, however, still continued in his ventures and by attacking Mysore he not only restored the waning prestige of the French, but also replenished his treasury. He corresponded with Delhi and got the Marathas to play to his tune. But the nationalistic spirit continued developing among the nobles who all of a sudden got Bussy dismissed. Bussy at this time was almost powerless. Reinforcement, however, soon arrived under Law, while on the other hand the British having got into trouble in Calcutta, could not come to the help of the rebellious nobles. Bussy in these circumstances was able to reestablish his position and started developing his influence once again. He was on the verge of a success when the Third Carnatic War was declared. The French General Lally occupied Fort St. David and before marching against Madras he invited Bussy to leave the Deccan and join him in the Carnatic. The details of this story will be given in the following pages. Bussy obeyed the call, he left the Deccan and as soon as this happened, all the gains that he had made so laboriously were immediately lost. This happened in June 1758.

Bussy was a man of foresight. Of all the French officers who worked under Dupleix, Bussy made a mark. The way he effected silent but significant changes in the Deccan and by bringing Salabat Jang to power, he earned the appreciation both of friends and foes. Dupleix immediately recognised his merit and as a mark of appreciation he proposed to marry him to Chonchon, one of his daughters though the proposal could not ultimately materialise due to the sudden recall of Dupleix. The appreciations of Dupleix, however, did not blur the visions of Bussy, nor did they make him lose his independence of thought. Twice he proposed to Dupleix to pull out from Hyderabad, because his far-sightedness convinced him that the nationalistic spirit was still strong enough among the Deccan people, and that the time was not yet ripe for them to go as far as Dupleix wanted him to go. Bussy was convinced that whatever sacrifice the French made it could never win them the perfect loyalty of the Nizam or that of his nobles. But his advice was never heeded. The way the whole nine years' work was lost to the French as soon as Bussy was recalled to Carnatic, proved the truth of his beliefs.

Had Bussy been left alone, and had Dupleix not forced his own ambitions upon him, he could probably have accomplished much more than he actually did. Had Bussy's ideas been followed, he should have remained in Carnatic instead of dividing the French forces and thereby weakening them. Bussy's actual worth was realised neither by Dupleix, nor by the Home Government in France. It was only after Bussy was taken prisoner by the British in the battle of Wandiwash¹ and sent back home that the French Government realised his worth and sent him once again to India to take his chance. But now it was too late.

Causes of Dupleix's Failure

Before we enter into a discussion of the next stage in the Anglo-French relations, i.e., the Third Carnatic War, it would be useful to say a few words about Dupleix, the French Governor of Pondicherry who succeeded to this office after the retirement of Dumas in 1741.

The French fought the first two Carnatic Wars during Dupleix's period of governorship. And the way Dupleix raised the status of the French Company during this period from a mere trading concern to a political power which counted among the greatest powers of southern India, is a tribute to his genius and diplomacy. Dupleix deserved high appreciation of his Home Government. By proposing neutrality to the British and securing help from the Nawab of Carnatic, he saved the French from the exploits of the strong British squadron under Commodore Barnett when the French had almost no naval force to depend upon immediately after the news of the breaking out of the Austrian War of Succession reached. But when he himself was strengthened after the arrival of La Bourdonnais, he acted like a pure politician and occupied Madras despite the warnings of the same Nawab of Carnatic. By defeating Mahfuz Khan, the son of the Nawab Anwar-ud-din of Carnatic at Madras and then on the banks of the Adyar, Dupleix gave an entirely new turn to the history of the Europeans in India. The myth of the invincibility of the Indian princes was broken and the way was clearly indicated for the rise and ultimate establishment of the European supremacy in India.

After the First Carnatic War Dupleix found himself burdened with a huge European force which could neither be immediately sent back home, nor could he afford to meet the expense of its maintenance in India. Dupleix thought it best with this force to help the warring Indian princes against one another which besides fetching the expense from the prince who was thus helped, would also afford an opportunity to study the Indian political situation and to exploit it in favour of his countrymen. The way in this connection was indica-

1. See the following pages.

ted by the British occupation of Devikottai,¹ but the full and conscious use of it was made only by Dupleix when he entered into a triple alliance with Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang and compelled the British to take up the cause of Mohammad Ali and his allies for which they were not as yet ready. After Anwar-ud-din was defeated and slain, Dupleix proposed that the allies should immediately march against Trichinopoly where Mohammad Ali had taken refuge, and secure its surrender. Had his proposal been accepted, it is probable that the whole course of events should have been different and the British should not have got the chances they did. Still the victory of Muzaffar Jang over Nasir Jang was the victory of the ambitious schemes of Dupleix which he had so laboriously matured. The honour, titles and material rewards that Dupleix secured at the hands of Muzaffar Jang at Pondicherry after his success against Nasir Jang, were the things he richly deserved. And a due credit must also be given him for the successful exploits of Bussy at Hyderabad and Aurangabad so long as Dupleix remained in India.

But from the outset, the nature seems to have been pitted against Dupleix, and it seems all the gains which Dupleix made were intended by it only to be transferred to the British so that the latter may not themselves have to break new ground wherever they went. Much of the advantages over the British that Dupleix had gained during the First Carnatic War were lost under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle for which the stupidity of the Government of France was to blame. The sudden murder of Muzaffar Jang created problems for Dupleix just when he was at the height of his glory. The tactical mistakes committed when Trichinopoly was not taken at the time it should have been taken, and again when Madras was not taken immediately after the fall of Arcot, may be assigned to bad luck than to lack of wisdom or to any material weakness.

Another cause of the failure of Dupleix may be the weak and not quite wise subordinates whom he had to reckon with in order to carry his ambitions through. His differences with Bourdonnais were unfortunate, for the latter could not understand the real spirit of the suggestions the former made. Law and Auteuil did not breathe the same daring and sagacious spirit as Dupleix himself did. In vain did Dupleix replace one French officer by another; none had the wisdom to understand his strategy and the capability to put it into effect. Of all the French officers, Bussy alone had the wisdom to understand and put the plans of Dupleix into effect. But here too, before the designs of Dupleix could reach the stage of their full fruition, he was recalled to France, and as soon as this happened the whole structure of the French political hold over the Deccan began slowly to crumble; and it suddenly crashed when Bussy himself had to leave that place for the Carnatic.

1. Which itself, however, was supposed to be a belated reply to the French occupation of Karikal ten years earlier, i.e., before the arrival of Dupleix.

Unlike the British East India Company the French Company was a Government concern, and the Government of France had many other things more important at hand than to look after the ambitions of the officers of their East India Company. The example of the Treaties of Aix-la-Chapelle and that of Pondicherry may not be quoted too often to bring home the point.

In this, however, Dupleix himself is also to blame. For it is said he never tried to educate the Home Government over his schemes. Dupleix was too sure of his plans, and he probably thought that his designs would not take much time to accomplish. That is why he overlooked the financial interests of the Company, never tried to explain his schemes to the Home authorities, and spent as much as over £3,50,000 from his own pocket in the hope that he would not take long to reach his goal and then to make all the necessary amendments. But Trichinopoly wasted too much time, and elsewhere also estimates erred rather on the side of being hasty.

Then it is said Dupleix flung his nets too far. He should not have sent Bussy away to the Deccan before he had consolidated his power in the Carnatic. The departure of Bussy for Hyderabad divided and weakened the French forces and proved to be a cause of the French failure in the Carnatic. But those who say this, do not contemplate the results which should have accrued if the French forces did not remain in Hyderabad to help the Nizam.

The superiority of the British naval power over that of the French, is also quoted as a cause of the failure of Dupleix. The fact of his being opposed by master minds like Clive, Stringer Lawrence and Saunders, is also quoted. Had Clive not taken Arcot as he did, the whole situation should have been materially different from what actually it was.

Yet when all is said, we must not overlook the limitations under which Dupleix worked. It was indeed Dupleix and Bussy, the two great Frenchmen, who showed the path to the persons like Clive, and the British were able to raise an empire in India. It is from these Frenchmen that the British learnt their lessons to interfere in the internal dissensions of the Indian princes and to use them to serve their own cause.

The Third Carnatic War 1758-1763

The hostilities that ended by the Treaty of Pondicherry, were soon resumed after the declaration of the Seven-Year's War in Europe in 1756. The French Government by this time had understood the importance of developing their power in India. But this was too late, and they could not make a drastic change in their attitude which was necessary if they were to make a perceptible impact over the Indian affairs..

Before the Third Carnatic War began in 1758, Clive, the hero of Arcot, had effected a revolution in Bengal by winning the Battle of Plassey in 1757. As a result of this victory the British were overnight converted from a trading concern into a sovereign power of Bengal with the whole of the rich resources of that province becoming theirs to command. Not only this, as soon as the news of the breaking out of the Seven-year's War arrived, Clive struck and captured Chandernagore, the French colony in Bengal. With the fall of this colony, the French influence in Bengal suddenly came to an end.

In the meanwhile the French Government despatched Count de Lally as the Supreme Commander of the French forces in India. Lally reached this country in 1758 already prejudiced in mind that all the French officers in India were inefficient, not to be relied on for some advice. He himself however, though a great soldier, possessed no experience of Indian affairs.

At the time Lally reached Carnatic, the British position there was not very sound. "The main part of the British forces was away busy in Bengal. Lally acted promptly and after a short siege secured the surrender of Fort St. David. The immediate next move should have been to capture Madras, and Lally was very much alive to the situation. But as again the luck would have it, Admiral De Ek, the French naval officer was not prepared to cooperate as Lally desired. And the French Governor of Pondicherry also informed him that he was not in a position to render him much financial help.

Lally's attention once again, naturally, was turned towards Tanjore, the same pitfall which had robbed the French of their victory against Trichinopoly during the Second Carnatic War. The Raja of Tanjore had not yet paid the promised sum of 70,00,000 rupees to the French and their allies. The Raja's subterfuges were all set aside. Tanjore was besieged and its surrounding country subjected to utter devastation. Ultimately the raja came out with an offer to pay five lakhs of rupees immediately, while Lally demanded ten lakhs. Had Lally accepted five lakhs and retired, he should have been in a better position. But he persisted in his demands, things were delayed, and in the meanwhile a sudden change took place in the situation, which compelled Lally to raise the siege without realising even a single penny. Madras getting an opportunity, had requested help from Bengal and strengthened its defences. Soon De Ek was defeated and forced to retire to the Bourbon island. Pondicherry was under immediate danger of attack.

Lally withdrew from Tanjore, yet more feeble and poor. He thought over the situation and concluded that Madras must be secured. But his forces were not equal to the task. Therefore, he immediately sent out an order to Bussy to leave Hyderabad and join him. In vain did Bussy plead that Madras may or may not be gained, after his departure Hyderabad would definitely be lost. In vain did he desire that Hyderabad should be made the centre of the French activities and that his experience and knowledge should be given due consideration. Lally was determined to demonstrate the superiority of his intellect. Bussy had ultimately to obey leaving behind Conflans, a man weak both in resolution and courage, in command of five hundred French and some four thousand Indians.

After the departure of Bussy from Hyderabad, the events in the Deccan moved fast. All the rebellious elements who awaited an opportunity, burst out into a revolt led by Raja Anandraz who occupied Vizagapatam and sent appeals to Calcutta and Madras for help. Here was an opportunity for the British offered on a platter. Clive despatched Colonel Forde from Calcutta to reinforce Madras. Forde was to march via the Northern Circars, at the head of five hundred English and about two thousand Indian soldiers, and try to win the Nizam over to the side of the British. The larger number of soldiers under the command of Conflans did not give him courage and he rather appealed to Lally for reinforcement. Forde took his opportunity, joined hands with Raja Anandraz, and forced the enemy to give him a battle near Candore. Raja Anandraz lost heart and deserted Forde just when he was needed the most. The raja's flight was misunderstood by the French as that of the British and they left their trenches to pursue the enemy. The British got an opportunity and fell on the disorganised mass. The French were defeated and Conflans fled to Masaulipatam. This happened in 1758. After this Forde occupied Rajahmundry and in 1759 he marched against Masaulipatam where

Conflans had reorganised himself and awaited the British to arrive. Forde besieged the town, but before he could take it he learnt that Salabat Jang at the head of about forty thousand soldiers had almost arrived. There was no time to lose. He took courage, made a sudden night attack and brought the French down.

The fall of Masaulipatam ended the story of the French supremacy in the Deccan. Salabat Jang, the Nizam, was impressed, and without fighting a battle entered into an agreement with the British. Under this agreement Masaulipatam and parts of the Northern Circars were transferred from the French to the British. The Nizam undertook to sever his connections with the French and accept the British as his overlords. The French reinforcement coming from Pondicherry returned, for they had nothing more in the Deccan now to accomplish.

In the meanwhile Bussy joined Lally, but the former was not trusted by the latter. With 2,300 French and about 5,000 Indian soldiers and with Bussy to follow him as a Brigadier, Lally captured Conjeeveram which lay about 47 miles away from Madras. After this he moved against Madras which could boast only of about eight hundred Englishmen and less than twenty-five hundred Indian soldiers. The city was besieged on 12 December 1758. But till the month of February 1759, the French could make no perceptible impression over the British, both sides suffering heavily in occasional skirmishes. Lally now began to suffer from the want of supplies. Just at this time General Pocock brought a fleet in India to the relief of Madras. Lally was compelled to raise the siege and fall back on Conjeeveram.

After reaching Conjeeveram, Lally transferred the command of the forces to Soupire and himself went away to Pondicherry to see if he could get from there the much needed money to clear the arrears of pay of his soldiers. Full one year was wasted in this manner. De Ek came back to help Pondicherry, but was soon sent by the British reeling away to France. Soupire transferred himself to Arcot, to fight from there. The British made movements towards Wandiwash, but deceived Soupire and suddenly fell upon Conjeeveram and captured it. And now a fresh detachment of the British forces arrived in India under the command of Sir Eyre Coote. The French soldiers had not received their pay for a considerable time and Lally failed to correct the situation despite all his efforts. They were thus demoralised.

The final reckoning between Sir Eyre Coote and Lally came at Wandiwash where two forces met in January 1760. Bussy was defeated and taken prisoner. Lally was pursued to Valdoren and then forced to flee to Pondicherry. Pondicherry was not immediately besieged. The British captured Jinji and only then put a siege

to that town. By that time Lally had reorganised its defences, and he gave a heroic resistance to the British. The siege continued for several months, but ultimately on 4 February 1761 Pondicherry surrendered. In the same year the British also captured Mahe. Lally had been taken prisoner and sent back to Europe where he was delivered to France. In his own country he was tried and sentenced to death.

After this the French power in India found itself almost at an ebb. The hostilities came to a formal end with the Treaty of Paris (1763) which brought the Seven Year's War in Europe to an end. Under this treaty, Pondicherry and Chandernagore were restored to the French, but they were never again to fortify these settlements. The French supremacy in India thus passed on to the British, their trade was completely shattered and the dreams of Dupleix for an empire in India were buried deep under the ground.

FAILURE OF THE FRENCH

It now remains only to sum up the causes why the British proved to be superior contenders and the French failed. One cause of the failure of the French in India lay in the character of the men who ruled over the destinies of the French back at home. A despotic government at home depending too much on the personal mannerism of individuals, could not be expected to deliver goods efficiently abroad. The incessant warfare into which the *Grand Monarque* Louis XIV indulged was bound to sap the nation of its vital power and leave it only an inflated balloon. Yet so long as he lived he took maximum interest in the French Company in India. But when he died, he was succeeded by Louis XV who was interested more in the hair-dressers and dancers than in the efficient administration of the French settlements far away in India. As against this was the enlightened Whig oligarchy in England which in every way was better disciplined and more capable of giving its attention where it was needed the most. Alfred Lyall is not wrong in concluding that it was through the "ill-managed European policy of Louis XV misguided by his mistresses and by incompetent ministers that France lost her Indian settlements in the Seven Years' War"¹

Then in the minds of the rulers of France, greater sources of prestige and power lay in extending the political frontiers in Europe towards Rhine and Italy than in establishing and expanding prosperous settlements in North America or India. France got herself too badly caught up in the mire of fruitless politics of the European continent to leave her strong enough to get success in the colonial ventures. On the other hand, however England had no such involvements in Europe to fetter her movements and divide her resources. She could easily concentrate on winning colonial victories

1. Lyall, Alfred, *Rise and Expansion of British Dominion in India* p. 117.

and therefore she was bound to play a better role in India than the French could.

William Pitt the Elder, one of the greatest war ministers that England has ever produced, took full advantage of the situation created by the tactless rulers of France. He liberally aided Prussia to keep France engaged in fight in Europe. France in these circumstances could not send the much needed men and money to America or to India.

Then, the French Company was guided more by the whims of the French rulers than by the exigency of the situations in India. This was natural too. Of the total share capital of 5½ million livres of the French Company in India as much as 3½ millions had been subscribed by the French monarch, and consequently it was no better than a department of the state where its conduct and administration were concerned. Two High Commissioners appointed by the King decided its policy, which again was executed by the directors who themselves were nominated out of the shareholders by the King. He having guaranteed dividend to the shareholders, it mattered little for the latter whether they themselves took any interest in the welfare of the Company or not. In fact they never cared to hold even a single meeting between 1725 and 1765. Everything was controlled by the Government, the main interest of which naturally was politics and not commerce. Little wonder if in these circumstances the commercial profits of the Company dwindled and for its very existence it had to borrow capital or sell away its trading rights or fall on its knees before the Government to beg for grants.

As against this was the English Company, independent of the political fetters, a private concern having full initiative in the hands of its Directors. It earned huge profits, helped the British Government with an annual payment of £4,00,000 for two years from 1767 and was even tipped for helping it in liquidating the national debt. And all this because the politics of the British Company were guided by the men on the spot and the share holders whose fortunes depended not on the State guarantees but their own initiative and deep involvement.

Officers of the French Company blundered in permitting their territorial ambitions to get the better of their commercial gains. When their home government was not in a position to subsidise them they should have concentrated on consolidating their finances before entering into expensive political ventures. But this they did not do, with the result that the "Governor of Pondicherry, who controlled the main French Treasury, was unable to finance operations, and the impetuous Lally made a hastily conceived and ill-executed attack on Tanjore to enforce payment of an outstanding debt and furnish them with ready cash. It ended in failure and gravely harmed the

French reputation.”¹ The French troops suffered from the lack of provisions and there was no money to pay the soldiers and the French workmen.

On the other hand, the Directors of the British Company constantly insisted on increasing trade, and the political warfare was directly discouraged unless it was imposed on them. And in this the British having established their sway on Bengal after the battle of Plassey, they were considerably strengthened.

The French had entered India through the Deccan which was less fertile and less productive than Bengal. It could finance neither the wild political ambitions of Dupleix nor the reckless military schemes of Count de Lally. The Circars which Bussy had secured from the Nizam, no doubt did help him remit half a lakh of rupees to Lally in 1758, but that seemed to be the only example of it, while Bengal, rich in its resources was a constant source of support and strength to the British Company. Ganges and its tributaries offered opportunities to the British to approach its remotest parts by means of boats without any hazard, and they collected the Bengal gold and sent its men continuously to fight their battles in Madras for about three years. They got money from Mir Jafar, but when he was bled white he was replaced by Mir Qasim to be followed again by the former. Whoever could pay them the best, was the British friend, and in this way they had money enough to fight the French.

Clive poignantly remarked about the French in 1759 : “I am confident before the end of this year they will be near their last gasp in the Carnatic, unless some very unforeseen event interposed in their favour. The superiority of our squadron and the plenty of money and supplies of all kinds. . . are such advantages as, if properly attended to, cannot fail, wholly effecting their ruin in that, as in every other part of India.”² And this proved almost correct. Even Napoleon or Alexander the Great should have failed in conquering India if they started from Pondicherry as a base. Marriott seems correct in his remarks : “Dupleix made a cardinal blunder in looking for the key of India in Madras ; Clive sought and found it in Bengal.”³

The British factories, existed on the important sea ports of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras which were too far apart from each other to be conquered simultaneously by any power. If one was lost, the other two still remained to support the British. On the other hand the French had Pondicherry to depend upon. On the West Coast, the French had Mahi and Karikal too, but neither of them could help them to face an onslaught of the British.

1. Griffiths, Sir Percival, *The British Impact on India*, London, 1952, p. 68.

2. *ibid* p. 68.

3. Marriott, J.A.R. , *The English in India*, p. 55.

Nor could the French Navy equal that of the British. It was only their naval superiority along the Coromandel coast that secured success on land to the French in 1746 as well as the achievements of Dupleix during 1748-51. But the Austrian War of Succession sapped the French naval strength. The French fleet had retired from the Indian waters, and during the Seven Year's War the naval supremacy easily passed into the hands of the British. Nor did Pitt the Elder fail in realising the importance of giving the English navy its due attention. With the help of their naval superiority the British easily cut off the French sources of supply outside the Carnatic, and the French could import neither men nor ammunition. On the other hand, the British "could feed Madras from Bengal as well as supply it from home, and by moving their men in ships they could make one man do the work of two. Lally blundered, but without the aid of sea power he would not have been destroyed."¹

The English naval base was in Bombay where they could easily repair their ships and keep them safe and from where they could operate at only a short notice. The French naval base on the other hand was far away in the Isle of France which could offer little advantage in terms of a speedy service or an early supply.

To add to all this, there were some blunders which were committed both by the Government of France and by the French officers in India. It was wrong for the former to have recalled Dupleix from India at a time when he was needed here the most. After his recall there was an attempt to reverse the policy pursued by him, little realising the disadvantages it would involve. Similarly, it was wrong for Lally to have recalled Bussy from Hyderabad and sacrifice in days the position they had established in years. Bussy's recall from Hyderabad created there a vacuum which was easily filled up by the British who not only made several territorial gains as a result of this, but also took the unprotected Nizam Salabat Jang under their own wings. This was a tactical mistake which the French committed, and which brought them a loss, material as well as psychological.

The French Government was not known for its generosity. It could not appreciate the services of its servants, nor had it the magnanimity to be considerate where they faltered. Dupleix sacrificed much for his country, yet he was prosecuted and made to die a pauper. Count de Lally was condemned and hanged. Mistakes were committed by the English officers as well. Lord Clive and Warren Hastings also did many things which went against the prescribed policy of the British Government and compromised the national honour. They were condemned and even impeached, but they were at the same time honoured and appreciated.

1. Smith, V A., *The Oxford History of India*, 1961, p. 464.

At the same time, however, the abilities and behaviour of the French officers as compared to the English in India also left much to be desired. Malleon remarks : "The daring of Lawrence, the dogged pertinacity of Saunders and his Council, the vigour and ability of Calliand, of Forde, of Joseph Smith, of Dalton, and of many others, stand out in striking contrast to the feebleness, the incapacity, the indecision of Laws, the de' Auteuils, the Brenniers, the Maissins and others whom Dupleix was forced to employ."¹ If Dupleix looked towards one direction, La Bourdonnais looked towards another. If Lally wanted to exhibit his supremacy over the French officers in India, Bussy was no less willing to flout it. Lally's 'hastiness, his violent temper, his uncontrolled and cutting speech, his habit of threatening without punishing, were all strong obstacles in his way.'² Little wonder, when he suffered reverses, the officers at Pondicherry exulted instead of being unhappy. Lally had come not only to expel the British from India, but also to purify the administration at Pondicherry. He, however did not understand that purification stemming from humility goes farther than that which issues from haughtiness and insulting attitude. But "a fit image and striking resume of the history of the last three years of the French in India" was provided effectively when after the surrender of Lally, a Frenchman Defer Put Dubois, Lally's intendant, to sword because he had in his possession certain incriminating papers which involved some officials at Pondicherry. Nothing could have gone more low, and nothing could have exhibited more effectively that the Frenchmen were fit only to lose.

Dupleix suffered from overweening self-confidence, so much so that he did not care to inform the French Government with regard even to some serious military reverses that he suffered in India, in the hope that he would soon correct the situation and earn only praise and no blame. He, however, failed to comprehend the situation correctly and failed to read the writing on the wall. The reverses repeated themselves endlessly, but due to the shortsightedness of Dupleix, no timely reinforcements could be got from home.

There was also then the destiny which worked only against the French. In this connection only one instance may suffice. Hyder Ali of Mysore entered into an agreement with Lally to help him against the British. But no sooner he did so than he himself was ousted from power by his *Dewan*, Khande Rao, in favour of the faineant monarch of Mysore. Hyder did succeed in getting himself restored to power once again, but this happened only after Pondicherry fell.

1. Malleon, G.B., *History of French in India*, 1886, p. 567.
2. *Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 165.

Growth of the British Power in Bengal

Developments after Aurangzeb's Death

It was in 1705 that Aurangzeb appointed Murshid Quli Jafar Khan as the Governor of Bengal and later on placed Orissa also under his authority. Murshid Quli transferred his capital from Dacca to Murshidabad, and soon after the death of Aurangzeb, developed a practically independent authority thus founding a new ruling dynasty in those provinces. He died in 1727, and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Shuja-ud-daula Khan who added Bihar also to his authority where he appointed Alivardi Khan as his Deputy. When Shuja-ud-daula died in 1739, his son Sarfaraz Khan succeeded him. Alivardi Khan had "an old friend at the imperial capital named Muhammad Ishaq Khan, surnamed Mutaman-ud-daulah, who then enjoyed the greatest confidence and power of the Emperor Muhammad Shah." Through him he approached the Emperor for a *Sanad* for fighting Sarfaraz and occupying the government of the provinces himself, promising in return to present the Imperial Exchequer an amount of one crore rupees in addition to an annual tribute of the same amount and all the wealth he would confiscate from Sarfaraz. By the middle of March 1740 he received orders from Delhi approving of his scheme¹ and on 10 April 1740 he defeated and killed Sarfaraz in a fierce battle near Giria and captured the viceroyalty of Bengal for himself.

Alivardi Khan who ruled Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from 1740 to 1756, should probably have proved an efficient ruler. But the repeated Maratha incursions into his territories made his days bitter and did not permit the country's trade, agriculture and industries to flourish. In 1751 the Marathas forced a treaty on the Nawab under

1. Datta, K.K., *Alivardi and His Times*, pp. 17-18, quoting *Siyar-ul-Munakherin* of Ghulam Husain Tabatabai.

which he agreed to pay them twelve lakh rupees annually as *chauth*. The Marathas also occupied Orissa and encouraged the Nawab's Afghan generals and soldiers to rebel against his authority. So long as he lived, Alivardi, however, was able to exert his authority over the Europeans. Jean Law writes : "He was zealous of his authority. He especially affected great independence whenever there was question of any affair between himself and the Europeans. To speak to him of *firman*s or of privileges obtained from the Emperor was only to anger him. He knew well how to say at the proper moment that he was both King and Wazir."¹ The Europeans constantly tried to keep him in good humour and were repeatedly asked to render pecuniary help to defend the country from the Marathas, because they also "participated of the protection of his arms."² During the Anglo-French conflicts in the Deccan, the Nawab closely watched their movements in Bengal, though he himself remained strictly neutral.

During the time of Alivardi Khan, the English Company had often to borrow money from the Bengal *seths* to satisfy his demands. But they gained also by raising a volunteer army and subscriptions to help the runaway people of the territories plundered by the Marathas. This won the British the people's appreciation and sympathies.

Siraj-ud-Daula

When Alivardi Khan died in 1756, he had no son to succeed him. His three daughters were married, one to the governor of Purnea, the second to that of Dacca and the third to that of Patna. But all his sons-in-law predeceased him, and he had to designate Siraj-ud-Daula, his grandson from his favourite youngest daughter, as his heir-apparent. For Siraj-ud-Daula, however, the throne of Bengal was not a bed of roses. He was merely in his twenties when he ascended the throne. His succession was immediately challenged by his cousin Shaukat Jang who was the son of the second daughter of Alivardi Khan at Purnea. Shaukat Jang raised a standard of revolt. Besides, Alivardi also had to reckon with the jealousy of his aunt Ghasiti Begum who was supported by her Dewan Rajballabh. The events in the Deccan had taught him not to rely on the Europeans in Bengal while he also feared the Hindu restlessness under the continuing Muslim rule.

"Siraj-ud-Daula was an impulsive but vacillating youth with many of the vices commonly attributed to princes and little of judgment or resolution which can redeem them. Denied by his youth the experience to cure his faults and by circumstances the security which

1. Hill, S C, *Bengal in 1756-1757*, (3 vols.), III, p. 160

2. *ibid.*, p. 289.

would in time have provided it, he acted on a series of contradictory impulses which combined to compass his ruin."¹

EVENTS LEADING TO THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY AND THE FIRST REVOLUTION IN BENGAL

The Nawab immediately prepared to meet the challenges that he faced. By appealing to the sentiments of Ghasiti Begum he was able to win her over and then carried her to his own palace where she was placed under a strict surveillance. He then marched against Shaukat Jang, but before he could accomplish his job at Purnea, he turned about and marched against the British.

It does not seem correct that at his death-bed Alivardi had advised Siraj to reduce the power of the Europeans in Bengal. He rather enjoined upon him not to quarrel with them. Siraj's own attitude towards the Europeans, and particularly towards the English before he came to power, was sympathetic, as it is clear from the "utmost politeness and distinction" with which he received the President of the English Company when he came to Hugli in 1752 after being designated heir-apparent. After his accession to the throne, however, the circumstances soon changed, which eventually brought about a rupture between him and the English.

The Rupture

The study of the causes of this rupture is interesting. The story of the developments in the Deccan where Nasir Jang was murdered and the French established a protectorate at Hyderabad, and the story of Clive's exploits at Arcot were well known to Siraj-ud-Daula. And his fears that the Europeans might create a similar situation in Bengal also were not quite unfounded. The following words which the Select Committee at Madras addressed to that in Calcutta in 1756, are revealing: "We need not represent to you the great advantage which, we think, it will be to the military operations and the influence it will have in the Nawab's councils to effect a junction with any powers in the Provinces of Bengal that may be dissatisfied with the violence of the Nawab's Government or that may have pretensions to the Subahship."² The Nawab's enemy Shaukat Jang was said to be in correspondence with the British to get their help. Ghasiti Begum and her Dewan Rajballabh also appreciated the English power and sympathy. All these developments were bound to make the Nawab cautious towards these foreigners.

Bitterness between the Nawab and the English developed when Krishnaballabh the son of Rajballabh took protection under the British. Rajballabh had earned disfavour of the Nawab by some

1. Smith, V.A., *The Oxford History of India*, pp. 466-67.

2. Hill, *op. cit.*, III, p. 328.

embezzlements of money, and his son was said to have carried to Calcutta all the wealth thus hoarded, getting his admission into that city by bribing at least two men of Fort William with "upwards of fifty thousand rupees", for protection against the Nawab. The Nawab's demand to surrender Krishnaballabh was refused by the British, for as Hill reports, "whilst the accession of Siraj-ud-Daula was doubtful, they might be justified in running some risk in the case of a man to whom kindness might be a useful speculation."¹

Then, the Imperial *firman* of 1716-17 had granted some trade privileges to the British Company whereby they traded in Bengal custom-free. But this privilege began to be abused by the servants of the Company under the Company's *dustaks* (free-trade passes) which they not only frequently used in their own private trade, but even went so far as to sell them to some Indian traders, "to the great prejudice of the Nawab's revenue." Nay more, as Hill wrote, "we levied large duties upon goods brought into our districts from the very people that permitted us to trade custom-free . . ."² Vainly did the Nawab complain against this.

The matter was precipitated when fresh hostilities in Europe broke out between the English and the French in the shape of the Seven-Year's War. In view of this, the English and the French, both started raising fortifications in Calcutta and Chandernagore respectively. Both of them had assured Alivardi Khan to remain peaceful in Bengal, but now they seemed to be preparing for an open clash between them. The Nawab was naturally incensed and objected to such violation of his dominions. The French stopped their fortifications, but the British continued with their job. It was an unsatisfactory communication in this connection received from Drake, President of the English Company, that made the Nawab turn about and decide upon dealing with the British first.

The War

May be, the Nawab should have shown some forbearance and tried to exhaust other peaceful means before he took this fateful decision. His passion for a quick revenge, young man as he was, however, got the better of him, and early in June 1756, the Nawab attacked and captured the British factory at Kasimbazar, taking Watts, its chief, a prisoner. On the 5th the Nawab's estimated 50,000 sepoys appeared before Calcutta. Their attack on the northern side of the town was repulsed, whereafter, on 15 June Fort William was besieged. Four days after this, Drake together with most of the members of his council, joined by women and children, escaped through the back door down the river Hugly and landed

1. *ibid.*, I, p. iv.

2. *ibid.*, III, p. 384.

at Fulta. The besieged force, thus deserted by its leaders, placed command in the hands of one Holwell but their resistance could not last for more than two days, and ultimately they were compelled to surrender.

The Black Hole

Those who thus surrendered were taken by the Nawab's officers to a dark cell within the fort. The cell "was eighteen feet long and fourteen feet ten inches wide. Only two holes barricaded with iron bars, admitted air from the dark, vaulted arcade, still red with the reflected glow of the fires outside. Somehow, like figures in a Dantesque nightmare, the stumbling dazed men and one woman were crushed inside one after the other through the single door, pushed sprawling on top of one another, fighting for space, for a foothold, some standing, some—the more fortunate—trampled to death in those first moments of the long night that lay ahead. When the door was finally locked on them, 145 men, including twelve wounded officers, and one woman, Mary Carey, had been forcibly thrust and crammed into the prison."¹ Those thus imprisoned, suffered horribly. The next day at "six a.m., ten hours after the lock had been turned in the door," when the door was opened, "twenty-two men and one woman staggered across the bodies of their companions and stumbled out, one at a time, into the fresh air of the parade ground, leaving a hundred and twenty-three dead behind."²

J.Z. Holwell was one of the survivors, and it is from the graphic account which he prepared nine months after the event during his voyage home to England that most of the later references to this event have been drawn. Besides, some French and Armenian records also refer to it, though they differ on the number of the prisoners who thus suffered. It may, however, be significant to note that there is no mention of the event in the contemporary account, *Siyar-ul-muntakherin* of the Muslim historian Ghulam Hussain. Nor do the proceedings of the Calcutta Council just at the time, nor any other Indian historian mention anything about it. Some modern writers are prone to dismiss it as a gigantic hoax, while others consider it a comparatively minor incident but the contemporary British made a capital of it to malign the Nawab and win over the public support for a war of aggression which they were about to wage.

After Calcutta was captured, the Nawab placed it under the charge of Manik Chand. "With his characteristic imprudence Siraj did nothing to follow up his victory, leaving Drake and the fugitives to languish at Fulta, succoured only by a reinforcement of 230 men in July. Instead he confined himself to eliminating his only dynastic

1. Barber, Noel, *The Black Hole of Calcutta*, p. 206.

2. *ibid.*, p 229.

rival, Shaukat Jang."¹

British March and the Peace Treaty

When the news of the disaster in Calcutta reached Madras, the authorities there decided immediately to take steps to recover their settlement, failing which, they knew, they would lose their prestige in the eyes of Indians as it would weaken them before the French. They despatched Admiral Watson who was to command the expedition to Bengal by sea, and Colonel Clive who was put in charge of the expedition by land. Nine hundred Europeans and fifteen hundred Indian sepoys sailed with them on 16 October 1756. The fugitives at Fulta were relieved in December, while on 2 January 1757 they secured Calcutta from Manik Chand who had been bribed and who surrendered after a show of resistance. Thereafter deciding to march against the Nawab, the British forces plundered Hooghly and its environments.

All this roused the Nawab's anger and he collected 40,000 men and marched towards Calcutta with the determination to drive out the British once for all. But he was not known for tenacity of purpose, and after crossing the Hooghly, on 30 January when Clive delivered a surprise attack on him, he was completely unnerved, notwithstanding the fact that the fight was indecisive. Preponderantly large army as compared to that of the enemy did not give him the strength of mind needed in a war, and he accepted the advice of his officers to sign peace. Probably the officers who advised him thus, were themselves nurturing some grievances against him, or else they had been corrupted by money and promises and they were simply playing in the hands of the enemy.² But if that was so, and if he suspected the fidelity of his officers, he should have dealt with that problem before he ventured to strike against the British.

Some other arguments have also been advanced as to why the Nawab overnight decided to be friends with the British, the most important of them being the fact that Ahmed Shah Abdali had invaded India and captured Delhi in 1756. He was getting apprehensive lest the Afghans should advance towards Bengal in conjunction with the Rohillas and the Nawab of Oudh. He in these circumstances thought it prudent to strengthen himself by winning over the support of the British.

The proposal for peace was welcome on the other hand to Clive as well. His relations with Admiral Watson were strained, and the Calcutta Council was also jealous of the Madras authorities having vested independent powers in him. Besides, there was a fear that 800 French with a train of field artillery in Bengal might join the Nawab. There was also the possibility of Bussy coming from the

1. Smith, V A., *op cit*, p. 467.

2. See Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal* 1963, p. 156.

Northern Circars and joining hands with the enemy. Besides, Madras clamoured to have its forces returned, as the conditions in Carnatic were considered disquieting enough.

So, when the proposal for peace came from the Nawab, Clive accepted it. A treaty was signed on 9 February 1757. It provided that (i) all the privileges secured by the British from the Emperor of Delhi, were confirmed. (ii) The British would continue enjoying right to *dustaks* within Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (iii) Their factories would be restored and they would be compensated for all other losses. (iv) They would be free to fortify Calcutta as they desired, and (v) they would have the right to coin their own money. In return for all this the British signed an offensive and defensive alliance with the Nawab.

Capture of Chandernagore

The Nawab seemed to be in a real tight corner, and Clive made best use of the situation. After the signing of the peace treaty one would have thought Clive's job to be over, and he should have returned to Madras with his troops as he was being pressed for it. But Clive thought differently and wanted to press his advantages a step further. He thought it prudent to do so because he regarded the treaty as a scrap of paper only, and he knew that it would be flouted by the Nawab the moment he found himself in a position to do so. In the heat of the new alliance that he signed, he therefore asked the Nawab to permit him to capture the French settlement of Chandernagore. It was a very difficult demand, for the Nawab having established friendship with the British, had absolutely no desire to be unfriendly towards the French. Clive used cajolery as also threats. To this the Nawab gave helpless, characteristically half-hearted and vague reply which was interpreted by the British as they wished. The British stormed the French settlement and to the surprise of every body including the Nawab, they captured it within a few days. It was a marvellous feat accomplished by the English navy. But more marvellous was the diplomatic defeat the British hurled in the Nawab's face. Quick manoeuvres of Clive gave no opportunity to the Nawab to correspond with the French and take up an alternative position. One should have wished the Nawab to have administered a similar quick blow on Clive himself before he signed with him his offensive and defensive alliance which at any rate, turned out to be a mere scrap of paper.

Conspiracy Against Nawab

The Nawab was thus thrown into a helpless position. He had no option but to send a congratulatory message to the British on their success at Chandernagore. But his misfortune did not yet come to an end. Clive realised that the Nawab was like a wounded snake

who, at the first favourable opportunity, would strike against the British. Madras pressed that its troops should be returned, but Clive knew that his job had not yet come to an end in Bengal. For if the British forces had returned, the Nawab would have got his freedom to contact the French. And if Bussy had marched from the Deccan and established a junction with him, the British troops being away. Bussy should have played the same role in Bengal as Forde had done in Hyderabad, and the same fate should have befallen the British in Bengal as befell the French in the Deccan in the Third Carnatic War. He therefore thought it prudent to take the advice of the Select Committee at Madras. They advised on October 13, 1756, in favour of effecting "a junction with any powers in the Province of Bengal that may be dissatisfied with the violences of the Nawab, Government or that may have pretensions to the Subahship," and to do away with Siraj-ud-Daula once for all.

There was disaffection among the nobles of the Nawab. Some Hindu bankers like Jagat Seth and zamindars like Maharaja Krishnachandra of Nadia disliked the Nawab for his anti-Hindu policies. Already an attempt had been made to replace him by Yar Lutf Khan, a commander of his army, but it failed. Then a conspiracy seemed afoot to make Mir Jafar the Nawab. Mir Jafar was a commander of the Nawab's forces, who had married the sister of Ali-wardi Khan. He had been insulted¹ by Siraj-ud-Daula "once, for which he seemed anxious to take a revenge. Nor in these circumstances was it difficult to exploit the Nawab's army which was full of Persians and Afghan soldiers of fortune who looked only to the immediate chief, but were ready to transfer their allegiance to the highest bidder.

Clive decided to take advantage of the situation, for he agreed with the Select Committee that in "the governance of the company's affairs in Bengal. The Nawab is so universally hated by all sorts and degrees of men; the affection of the Army is so much alienated from him by his ill usage of the officers and a revolution so generally wished for, that it is probable that the step will be attempted (and successfully too) whether we give our assistance or not."² When, therefore, he learnt from Watts, the Company's Resident at Murshidabad towards the end of April 1757, that the conspirators wanted the British to join them to overthrow the Nawab in favour of Mir Jafar, he readily agreed.

The conspirators signed an agreement. It was believed that the Nawab's treasury contained 40 million sterling. Mir Jafar agreed that if he were placed on the throne (1) he would compensate through the British everybody for the losses suffered during Siraj-ud-Daula's

1 For further details see Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, p. 217.

2 Griffiths, Sir Percival, *The British Impact on India*, p. 72.

attack on Calcutta. Thus the Company would get a crore of rupees on this account, fifty lakhs would be distributed among the European residents of Calcutta, twenty lakhs among Hindus and Muslims and seven lakhs among the Armenians who had suffered losses. (2) He was also to reward the company with certain territories. (3) He would not raise any fortification near Hooghly. (4) He would enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the British. (5) He agreed to deliver up to them all the Frenchmen and their property in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Besides, promises for presents were also made to Clive and other British officers, and Rai Durlabh, one of the chief conspirators, was to be appointed a minister.

When the above secret agreement was drawn up, Omichand, a Sikh merchant at Calcutta, acted as the go-between. When everybody was promised his reward, "Omichand demanded 5 per cent of all that might be found in Siraj-ud-Daula's treasury and a quarter of his jewels"¹ for himself and threatened to divulge the whole matter to the Nawab if he was not promised this in the agreement. Omichand's demand seemed to be preposterous, and therefore to dupe him Clive drew up two almost identical treaties, one on red paper which guaranteed Omichand £30,000 and the other, which was the genuine one on white paper which lacked this clause. Admiral Watson refused to be a party to the trick, but Clive ordered his signatures to be forged.

It is interesting to note that this fraud was not known to the Directors in London for 15 years. It did a great damage to Clive's reputation.² Omichand had helped the British in the capture of Chandernagore and had forewarned them when the Nawab planned an attack on Calcutta. He served them thus on many other occasions and when Clive was called upon to explain why he played a fraud on him, his explanation was that although Omichand had been extensively employed in the Company's investments, he had played the English false at the time of the Nawab's attack on Calcutta. At the time of the intrigues with Mir Jafar attempts had been made to keep him out, but they failed. When his demands in the agreement were being sympathetically considered, a letter from Watts was received which gave certain proofs of Omichand having behaved with great treachery. It was due to this reason that Clive decided on the expedient of the two agreements referred to above. "The view taken by Clive and the Committee was that this was the only way of saving the lives of Mir Jafar and the Englishmen at Murshidabad, and at the same time of not rewarding a man who so richly merited punishment."³

1. Dodwell, Henry, *Dupleix and Clive. The Beginning of Empire*; pp. 143-44.

2. Gatty, Reginald, *Robert Clive and the Founding of British India*, 1927. pp. 167-68.

3. Dodwell, Henry. *op. cit.*, pp. 143-44.

Be that as it may, the whole secret was out sufficiently before the actual clash came about, yet the only thing the Nawab did was that he invited all his four military commanders, namely Mir Jafar, Rai Durlabh, Yar Lutf Khan and Mir Muin-ud-Din Khan who took a fresh oath of loyalty to him. Of these, all but the last one, were at that time actively engaged in the conspiracy.

THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY

When everything was ready Clive wrote to the Nawab charging him of having violated the treaty of 1757, and without awaiting the reply he marched towards Plassey, a distance of fifteen miles, reaching there at one o'clock on the morning of June 23. Clive lay in a mango-grove, about 800 yards in length and 300 in breadth, the trees planted in regular rows. Siraj-ud-Daula entrenched himself with his army at a distance of about one mile from there.¹ Clive had with him 1,000 Europeans and twice that number of Indian soldiers, while the Nawab commanded a total of 50,000—two thousand directly under him and the remaining 48,000 divided into four divisions, each under Mir Jafar, Yar Lutf Khan, Rai Durlabh and Mir Muin-ud-Din.

Seeing such heavy concord of forces pitted against him, for a while Clive was struck with awe. What if Mir Jafar and the others changed their minds and betrayed the British instead of being traitors to the Nawab? Clive's nerves began to fail him. But luck was in his favour, and during his temporary absence from the field, Kilpatrick ordered an advance. The order, once it had gone out, could not be recalled. In the Nawab's army the treachery was already at work. A day earlier there had been rains and his gun-powder and other ammunitions of war had not been properly protected. When the British attacked, of the four commanders of the Nawab, three remained aloof while only Mir Muin-ud-Din advanced to meet the enemy. He had, however, no dry gun-powder to feed his guns, while the British guns fired severe volley of shots which worked a disaster in his ranks. He himself was mortally wounded, and the Nawab lost the only commander loyal to him. The British also however were compelled to retire to their mango-grove, and if the other commanders had just marched, they could have completely wiped them out. But this did not happen.

The Nawab knew that all his commanders were playing treachery yet he called them to a council of war. The treacherous counsellors advised him to leave and they would handle the direction of war themselves. The Nawab thus fled with his 2,000 soldiers, while his commanders contacted the British to get their forces dispersed. The war, thus was little more than a cannonade, and Clive won

1 Milleson, G B, *Lord Clive*, 1962, p. 76

without having much to fight.¹

"Just as the beaten and betrayed army was moving off with its impediments, its elephants, its camels, leaving to be scrambled for an enormous mass of baggage, stores, cattle, and camp equipage. Clive received messengers from Mir Jafar requesting an interview. Clive replied by appointing a meeting for the morrow at Daudpur, a village twenty miles to the south of Murshidabad."² Mir Jafar was installed on the *masand* at Murshidabad by Clive on 28 June 1757. On the 2nd of the following month Siraj-ud-Daula was captured by Miran, Mir Jafar's son, who had him put to death.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE

The battle of Plassey is said to have commenced a new era in the history of Bengal that brought about a revolution in the province, as also a revolution in the character of the English Company itself. The war over, the distribution of its spoils, started. The Nawab's treasury was inspected, but it did not yield the 40 million sterling as it was expected to. The British therefore agreed to receive only one-half of the stipulated amount at the end of October and the remainder within three years thereafter by equal six-monthly instalments. The Company also received the territory of 24 Parganas together with some other grants. Clive himself benefited to the tune of sixteen lakh rupees.³ Other officers were similarly rewarded and even an ordinary English soldier made a fortune. When the wealth was transferred from the Nawab's treasury to Calcutta, it was "received rupturously! A world of guns were fired, the ladies all got foot-sore with dancing and 'a Bumper goes to your (Clive's) health each day in every house from the Admiral's downwards."⁴

Personally Clive benefited in another way also. Pitt remarked in the British Parliament: "We had lost our glory, honour, and reputation everywhere but in India. There the country had a heaven-born general who had never learnt the art of war, nor was his name enrolled among the great officers who had for many years received their country's pay. Yet was he not afraid to attack a numerous

1 According to a British writer, Clive may rather 'be pitied for the trick that fortune, all too kind, played him on this occasion.' Had he won after a fighting, he would have been saved from 'the cruel jeers and envious thrusts of too many of his contemporaries.' See Kulkarni, V.B., *British Statesmen in India*, 1961, p. 23.

2. Malleon, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

3. According to Edward Gilliat, Clive accepted between £200,000 and £300,000 "As soon as the battle... had enriched him, Clive sent £10,000 to his sisters, helped munificently many poor friends, ordered his agent to pay £800 a year to his parents and settled £500 a year on his old commander Lawrence." "I must trouble you," he wrote to his agent, "to provide me two hundred shirts—the best and the finest you can get; sixty pairs of the finest stockings and box-full of full bottom wigs." See Edward Gilliat, *Heroes of Modern India*, pp. 30-31.

4. Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, 1935, p. 92.

army with a handful of men.”¹ And for this the Directors rewarded him by appointing him Governor of the British possessions in Bengal.

Besides, the Company got full freedom to trade throughout the Nawab's dominions. It established subordinate factories in the interior of the province and established its mint at Calcutta from which the first E.I.C. rupee appeared on 19 August 1757. A contemporary memoir commented: ‘The company, by an accession of territory, has an opportunity of making an ample settlement which, under proper management, may not only be extremely serviceable to her, but also to the Nation; and having a revenue from these lands, the mint of Calcutta, and the lease of saltpetre at Patna, which amounts on the whole to one hundred thousand pounds a year, there is a provision against future dangers upon the spot, and further expense.’²

The battle of Plassey demonstrated bankruptcy of the existing system of administration, it brought to the surface the internal dissensions in the State and clearly exhibited that the days of the Muslim rule in Bengal were now numbered.

As a result of this battle a new element appeared in the political life of Bengal. Mir Jafar who ascended the Bengal throne, was now bound only to play as a puppet in the British hands. The English became king-makers in Bengal which opened the way for the establishment of the British empire in India in due course of time. In fact the imagination of Clive began to run riot immediately after the battle was over, and he wrote to William Pitt in England that if the British Government itself took interest and sent a few thousand soldiers to India, the whole Indian continent could be brought down to the feet of the English monarch.

As a result of the British success in this battle, the other European powers were completely eliminated from the political scene in Bengal. The French were delivered to the British hands and feet tied, and no other European power could now dare challenge the British supremacy in that part of the country.

Bengal was of the richest province of India. Its manufactures went to the remotest parts of the country and it attracted the riches of all parts of it. Its rich resources now not only helped the British in winning the Third Carnatic War against the French, and in conquering the rest of India, but they also brought about such prosperity to England as she had never seen before. Each English servant of the

1. Gatty, Reginald, *op cit.*, pp. 167-168.

2. *Bengal: Past and Present*, July-September, 1928, pp. 6-10, quoted by Sarkar, S.C. & Dutta, K.K., *Modern Indian History*, II, 1959, p. 72.

Company in India became *nabob* and when he went back home, with the money he made in India, legally or illegally, he made an attempt to purchase political power in England.

For Bengal the bad days had begun. A transitional stage appeared in which the Muslim political power began slowly to wane as against the British whose power began to grow stronger day by day. It took quite some years before the British completely took charge of its administration. In the meanwhile nobody felt responsible for its welfare. Its judicial machinery was paralysed, its law and order were wrecked and its wealth steadily drained out to England sapping its vitality till the country became poor and its people turned paupers.

In 1772 two committees examined witnesses and published details. "They found that between 1757 and 1766 no less than £2,169,665 had been given by the natives to the Company's servants in presents, besides the yearly income of £30,000 paid to Clive as a noble of the Mughal Empire, while £3,770,833 had been paid in compensation for losses." Why did he set the bad example of taking money from Mir Jafar? By way of answer Clive described how he saw the treasury at Murshidabad after the battle of Plassey. "I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels! Mr Chairman," he cried, "at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation."¹ One only wonders why then the stipulated money could not be paid by Mir Jafar to the Company immediately and the payments were made only by instalments? Clive should have been charged of having told lies before the committees. Even this, however, could not have saved Bengal from its exploitation.

CLIVE AND MIR JAFAR

Mir Jafar was the new Nawab, but everybody knew that he would be so only in name. The victory at Plassey was Clive's victory over Siraj-ud-Daula, and not Mir Jafar's and the former lost no time in letting everybody know that the real power which sustained the Nawabship resided in him. For this reason he did not retire to Calcutta; instead he remained with his troops in the neighbourhood of Murshidabad, exercising his authority over the provinces from there. He boasted of his victory to everybody and made it his concern to obtain a formal recognition for Mir Jafar from the Mughal Emperor using the influence and wealth of Jagat Seth for the purpose. And Mir Jafar came to know of the approval of the Emperor with regard to his becoming the new Nawab, only after Clive sent him a copy of the Emperor's letter to this effect.

1. Gatty, Reginald, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

Clive undertook on himself the duty to appoint to responsible offices only the men who could deliver themselves efficiently. Rai Durlabh, one of the conspirators, had been rewarded with his appointment as chief minister, but the latter did not consider it sufficient. Clive, in order to strengthen himself against Mir Jafar, entered into a secret agreement with the Rai to support his claims. The Nawab knew that Durlabh was conspiring against him and he wanted to remove him. But the Rai had the powerful support of Clive and the Nawab was completely helpless.

Clive wrote letters to Ram Narain, the Nawab's deputy at Patna and other such officers to instruct them as to how they should work. Clive gave instructions even to Durlabh and no important appointment could be made without his consent, the pretext being to protect the Nawab's interests as best as possible. Instructions were issued to all the regional chiefs to deliver to the British all the Frenchmen in their territories. Ram Narain was suspected of having helped the French quietly to slip out of his territory. Clive complained to the Rai who wrote back : "If Ram Narain does not obey us we together will punish him."¹

Two of the Nawab's zamindars rebelled against him. Clive instructed the Nawab to quell their rebellion and also sent 500 men to help him. But all this was not done gratis. He applied to the Nawab to grant him the monopoly of buying saltpetre which was used in making gunpowder. The Nawab naturally could not agree, but he had no courage to go against the wishes of Clive either. The Nawab wanted that at least fifty per cent of saltpetre should be reserved for him. But Clive was cleverer, and ultimately the Nawab had to be satisfied with only 15 per cent, while the remaining 85 per cent went to the British.

The Mughal Prince Ali Gauhar (later Emperor Shah Alam II), the eldest son of Alamgir II, enjoying the title of 'The Prince of Bengal', marched on Patna on 3 April 1759 with a view to enforcing his claims on the three provinces. He was, however, repulsed by Ram Narain, the local chief, but Clive who at the time was a few miles away with his troops, appropriated the victory to himself declaring that the Prince had fled for fear of the British forces advancing to Patna. And for this he secured the grant of a *jagir* as reward. Ali Gauhar launched a fresh attack on Bihar early in 1760, but was again repulsed by the local chief assisted by the English. All these events strengthened the claims of Clive as being the protector of Mir Jafar.

A complication arose when in 1759 the Dutch led an expedition into Bengal. The Dutch, like the British, had considerable commercial transactions in Bengal. They had their factories at places like Patna

1 *Bengal & Madras Papers*, quoted by Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, p. 221.

Dacca, Pipili, Chinsura and Kalikapur, near Kasimbazar, and their business concerns existed even at some villages in the interior. Their territorial possessions, however, existed only at Baranagore and Chinsura, with their Council established at the latter place. This council was subordinate to the Dutch authorities at Batavia. While marching against Calcutta, Siraj-ud-Daula had sought help from the Dutch, as also from the French and the Danes. The Dutch failed to cooperate, with the result that a heavy fine was imposed on them. When Calcutta was attacked, the British also requested the Dutch to help them against the Nawab, for which they argued, they were entitled under the treaty subsisting between the Governments of England and Netherlands. However, the Dutch replied that the treaty did not extend to the colonies in India. Despite the strict orders of the Nawab, the Dutch did, however, help the Fulta fugitives with provisions and the necessary information for which the British were grateful.¹

When the British recovered Calcutta the Dutch congratulated them, but the later expansion of the British influence in Bengal made them jealous, particularly when the French influence in Bengal was shattered, and when Mir Jafar ascended the throne and through him the British started exercising their supremacy over all. There were rumours that Mir Jafar was secretly encouraging them to challenge the British to which Holwell gave credence. These rumours were strengthened when in October 1759, six or seven Dutch vessels from Batavia full of European and Malayan troops arrived at the mouth of the Hooghly. Mir Jafar proceeded against them, but granted them "some indulgence" when they "had engaged to leave the river with their ships and troops as soon as the season would permit." Broom and Malleson condemned Mir Jafar of double-dealing, but the Calcutta Council observed on 22 October 1759, that the Dutch soldiers had arrived "unknown to the Subah (Nawab)". Mr K.K. Dutta disagrees with the charge levelled against the Nawab on the ground of these observations of the Council which was "expected to be intimately acquainted with the state of affairs in Bengal."²

Be that as it may, Clive wrote a strong letter to the Nawab asking him to send his son to chastise the Dutch, to which Mir Jafar did not agree. Then the English made necessary preparations, and marched against the Dutch whom they gave a battle on the plains of Bedara, on November 25, 1759. In less than half an hour the Dutch were put to a total rout, after which they sued for peace. Three days after, Miran also arrived with about seven thousand horse to exterminate the Dutch for having disturbed the peace of the province. The Dutch, however, implored the intercession of Clive who was generous enough to save them from Miran's fury on

1. See Dutta, K.K., *Dutch in Bengal and Bihar*, pp. 24-28.

2. See *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

the following terms : "that they shall never meditate war, introduce or enlist troops, or raise fortifications in the country ; that they shall be allowed to keep up one hundred and twenty-five European soldiers, and no more for the service of their factories of Chinsura, Cassimbazar, and Patna ; that they shall forthwith send their ship and remaining troops out of country ; and that violation of any one of these articles will subject them to utter expulsion."¹

Bedara victory was yet another feather in Clive's cap. This victory, after that of the Plassey, enhanced the British prestige and left them the real masters of Bengal. The Dutch ambitions like those of the French in Bengal, were completely crushed, and there was no European rival left seriously to challenge the British authority again.

As, however, Clive's prestige rose, Mir Jafar chafed under the galling yoke of his impetuous authority. The internal disturbances and the external threats all consumed money. The Marathas still realised their customary annual *chauth* the right to which they had exacted from Alivardi Khan, and to which Clive gave his sanction in the time of Mir Jafar. The state of anarchy as it existed, stopped the flow of revenues into the State treasury, and Mir Jafar's hopes that after the heavy payments that he had made to the British their demands on him would relax—were completely shattered. The Nawab could not pay his stipulated instalments regularly, while the unstipulated demands constantly increased. In vain did he implore Clive's mercy flatteringly regarding him as his son. His own army's pay fell into arrears, and the *Pishcash* (presents) he had to send to the Emperor taxed his resources. Clive insisted on his demands with the result that the Nawab had to assign to the British the revenues of Burdwan, Nadia and Hooghly until his treaty obligations were fully discharged. On 25 February 1760 Clive embarked for England, leaving the charge of Company's affairs in Bengal to Holwell.

1. Dutta, *Dutch in Bengal and Bihar*, p. 48, quoting Clive's Narrative; Malcolm, *Life of Clive*, II p, 86.

Henry Vansittart and Mir Kasim

"The Vansittarts", writes Keith Feiling, "made a close-knit and highly individual clan. Dutch by remote origin, they had reached England by way of Danzig a century before, amassed large fortunes in Baltic trading, and struck their roots deep in Berkshire, in part through (Henry Vansittart's) mother, a stonehouse heiress of Radley."¹

We do not know the exact date of Henry's birth, though it is known that "he had already been both at Reading Grammar School and Winchester and was a fair scholar, so that he had had to pack a lot into thirteen years,"² the age when his father discovered that he was already member "of the Hell-Fire club at Meclenham Abbey, where John Wilker and Francis Dashwood practised their blasphemy and obscenities,"³ and shipped him off to India.

Reaching Madras, Vansittart, a junior writer, worked hard, collected a sufficient knowledge of Persian, and earning the representation of commercial expert carved out for himself an influential position in the company. He married Emilia Morse, the daughter of an ex-Governor of Madras. His sister, Anne, was about to marry Robert Palk who became Governor of Madras later in 1776. After five years of service during which he amassed a huge fortune, Vansittart returned to England. The fortune, however, easily collected, was soon more easily wasted, and he returned to Madras where his services were used in diplomatic transactions with the French, and where through his intelligence and hard work, became close to Clive. The latter recommended him to the post of Governor in Bengal when he himself after his Governorship in the province embarked for England, leaving the charge of the company's affairs to Holwell.

1. Feiling, Keith, *Warren Hastings*, 1954, p. 40.
2. Woodruff, *op. cit.*, *The Founders* p. 114.
3. Feiling, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

When Vansittart joined as Governor of Fort William, in July 1760 he was a young man of only twenty-eight. There were more senior members in the council of sixteen over which he was to preside and they, particularly Peter Amyatt among them, were not going to like this importation from Madras. Then the President enjoyed only a casting vote in case of a tie, and he as an executive head, worked only in the name of the council whose policy, even though he may be opposed to it, he was responsible in carrying out. To add to this, there were the vested interests which the councillors had developed, the seniormost of them being usually absent, "since the plums of the service were the cheifdoms of factories, at Patna, Dacca, or Kosimbazzar, which were combined with a seat in council.¹ Among these members were John Johnstone and William Hay who had partnership with a notorious son of Dutch parents. William Bolts, who had come to England at 14, and securing an appointment in the Company's service at 25, came down to Bengal where he started private trade in diamonds, cotton, opium etc., which the Company's servants were authorised at the time to do. They indulged in all sorts of irregularities, oppression and corruption, their sole aim being to amass wealth by means fair or foul. Obviously, Vansittart was not going to have an easy life in Bengal, more so when shortly after his arrival three of his supporters in the Council were dismissed, and the Directors "appointed his most bitter opponent, Ellis, to be chief at Patna Ellis was violent, loud-mouthed and rude, the kind of man who makes himself offensive to his fellow-travellers in a railway carriage, the kind of man that young Indians . . . often pictured as the typical Englishman"².

Within the country, Mir Jafar put on the throne by Clive, was the Nawab for whom every change in the office of the company's President only increased misfortune.

Fear of the invasion of Prince Gauhar persisted, some local chiefs such as Asad Zamin Khan of Birbhum, according to the intelligence received by the English, prepared to help the Prince. And to add to the complications, the Marathas penetrated into Bengal from the south. The English helped the Nawab against all these troubles, but they complained of the lack of cooperation from him and from Miran who still further antagonised the British by dismissing Rai Durlabh. Miran, however, was killed by lightning on 3 July which gave the British some relief. It cleared the way for the British to appoint a deputy to the Nawab who could play in their hands without resistance.

Mir Kasim, the son-in-law of the Nawab, had immense wealth while the latter had become almost a pauper. Besides, Mir Kasim gave every assurance to the British of a firm friendship and promised

1. *ibid.* p. 43.

2. Woodruff, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

all sorts of grants, rewards and presents. A new conspiracy similar to the one to which Mir Jafar himself had been a party three years back was hatched up. Mir Jafar was already a helpless puppet. His army also was in a defiant mood for want of pay. But he was not willing to be placed at the mercy of his son-in-law after having him as his deputy. He therefore agreed himself to step down in favour of the latter provided he was promised sufficient allowance for his maintenance and safety.

Mir Jafar's demands were accepted and on 22 October 1760, he was escorted by the European troops to Calcutta. Mir Kasim was proclaimed the new Nawab, and in terms of gains to the Company and its servants, history repeated itself all over again. This was the second revolution in Bengal.

MIR KASIM AND THE BATTLE OF BUXAR

Mir Kasim Comes to Power

Not much is known with regard to the early life of this man except that Mir Jafar picked on him as a suitable match for one of his daughters. Probably he belonged to some noble family and when his father-in-law ascended the throne of Bengal, he gave proof of his strong character and administrative capability as the *faujdar* of Purniah and Rangpur, though as a soldier in the battle-field he left much to be desired. The untimely death of Miran, the son of Mir Jafar of whom he was already considered a rival, opened the way for his further political and material progress.

The British needed money. The Anglo-French contest in the Deccan taxed the Company's resources and Madras pressed for money. The English army in Bihar was developing a defiant attitude due to the non-payment of their salaries. Mir Kasim was the right man who could help the Company out of its financial worries, for he was said to be in the possession of an immense wealth. Once when the army surrounded Mir Jafar's palace for the non-payment of the arrears of its pay, it was Mir Kasim who, writes Vansittart, came to his rescue by immediately paying three lakhs of rupees to his troops, and by becoming a security for their arrears "upon promise of being appointed to the vacant office of his deceased son, and declared his successors."¹ Warren Hastings and Holwell, members of the Calcutta Council were won over to his side because of this reason, though Miran had left behind a son and Mir Jafar wanted him to be recognised as his successor, though he was the son of a concubine.

On 27 September 1760 Vansittart made Mir Kasim sign a treaty

1. Vansittart, *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal*, p. 41.

with the English Company whereby the latter undertook that if he was raised to the office of *Neabut* (deputy Nawab), and as successor to the Nawab Mir Jafar, he would remain in firm friendship with the English Company. The English army would assist him in the management of all his affairs, while to meet their charges the Nawab would assign to the British the lands of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur. The English also would have the right to purchase one-half of the cement produced at Sylhet for three years. And Mir Kasim is also said to have promised to pay off the arrears due to the English army, to help meet a part of the charges on the Carnatic War and to pay twenty lakh rupees to the members of the Calcutta Council in the shape of presents. The circumstances under which he ultimately became Nawab have already been examined.

Mir Kasim as Nawab and his Failure

The first and the most pressing problem that the new Nawab had to face was that of money with which he had not only to pay off his dues to the British, but also to reform his administration and reconstruct his army. And for this he had to resort to many artifices in which, however, Vansittart gave his due sympathy. Every man who was considered rich became in his eyes a subject who had sympathies for the deposed Nawab and therefore must be divested of his wealth. All the chief officers of his father-in-law were charged of embezzlement and corruption and had their properties confiscated. The accounts department was re-organised and placed under those in whom he had confidence. Besides, numerous measures of retrenchment and economy were undertaken, the net result of which was that his financial condition began to improve, though many of the nobles felt harassed and often the people felt exploited at the hands of such of the Nawab's officers as were too zealous to earn his favours by increasing his income.

The Mir also felt urgently the need of introducing reforms in the army so that it should become an effective instrument to deal with the internal and the external dangers. Internally, there were the refractory chiefs like Raja of Birbhum and Ram Narain, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, who had to be suppressed, and though secretly, the English also whose main object was to make puppets of the Nawabs. Externally, the fear of Shah Alam's attacks, of Maratha incursions and of the nefarious designs of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh towards Bengal was a constant source of anguish. The striking power of the army had to be increased which, however, it was not very safe to do. For the British were bound to grow jealous of any such action. As a first step towards this direction therefore, he decided to

1. Colonel Coote and Major Carnac respectively.
2. *Bengal & Madras Papers*, p. 196, quoted by Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, p. 269.

shift his capital to Monghyr which was not only the central place to administer the whole of the province from, but also sufficiently distant from Calcutta to give him independence from the British. A factory for the manufacture of guns and fire-locks was established at Monghyr. French and American officers were engaged for the training of his officers, and the whole military department was organised after the European fashion. The total strength of the Mir's army was fifteen thousand horse and twenty-five thousand foot.

Though not acknowledged as a distinguished soldier, Mir Kasim marched against Azad Zaman Khan, the Raja of Birbhum, and forced him to acknowledge his authority by paying tribute which he had withheld. In this the British gave him due cooperation.

In Bihar, Ram Narain, the Deputy Governor was sure of the British help as also of the Company's own need to retain him. He had "three years accounts of his administration to settle, to avoid which, he made use of every shift and artifice that could be invented, and so effectually screened himself under the protection of the Colonel and Major,¹ that for four months together not a single explanation could be had from him."² Besides, Prince Gauhar's march into that province once again had created a problem. The administration of the province also deteriorated and needed his urgent attention.

The Nawab personally marched to Patna to settle the problems. The Mughal Prince had been properly dealt with by the British troops under Carnac before the Nawab reached Patna, but Ram Narain counting upon the British protection remained defiant. He was suspected of being in league with the Prince Ali Gauhar and was charged of negligence and corruption in administration. Vansittart did not give him any protection and he was removed from office and imprisoned, Rajballabh being appointed in his place. Vansittart, gave the Nawab further cooperation, and when he complained of the disrespectful attitude of the English army officer Major Carnac and later of that of Colonel Coote who was sent to replace him, both these officers were withdrawn one after the other.

The frontier districts also demanded the Nawab's attention. The chief in these districts had become refractory ever since the battle of Plassey and had withheld paying tributes. They openly sympathised with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and gave trouble to the neighbouring districts. Pahlwan Singh, the *zamindar* of Bhojpur was defeated, many others were duly punished and the Mir also signed an agreement with the Nawab Wazir of Oudh whereby peace was established in these border areas.

1. Colonel Coote and Major Carnac respectively.

2. *Bengal and Madras Papers*, p. 196, quoted by Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, p. 269.

Thus within a short time Mir Kasim was able to give proof of his ability as a good organiser and an efficient and forceful administrator. But precisely this ability aroused the antagonism of the local British officers and the jealousy of the majority of the Councillors at Calcutta, which ultimately spelled his ruin, even though Vansittart himself understood him, and continued his sympathies.

It had been doubted right from the beginning whether the British would permit the Nawab to gather the powers needed for effective administration. For, with every day that passed the British developed a predominant position not only in Bengal, but also in Delhi. Almost simultaneously with Mir Kasim's becoming the new Nawab they had developed a strong influence also in the imperial capital. An interesting account may in this connection be given. We have referred above to Prince Gauhar who marched towards Patna towards the close of 1760 when Mir Kasim personally went there to handle the problem. Major John Carnac, the British army chief at Patna had opened negotiations with the Prince. But the negotiations not being fruitful, the Major was ordered to attack the invaders over whom he obtained a complete victory on 13 January 1761. Mir Kasim reached Patna only thereafter.

After the British victory over Ali Gauhar the Prince approached the British to announce him as the Emperor and help him in mounting the throne in Delhi. Carnac received him with due respect, as if he were the conqueror. In the meanwhile chaotic conditions developed in Delhi where the Prime Minister murdered the King and the Marathas who secured supremacy were effectively humbled by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Prince Gauhar got anxious in these circumstances to hurry back to Delhi and try his luck, but the British would not permit him to leave despite his offer to give them the *subahdars* of the Bengal provinces. In order to induce him to stay on with them till the atmosphere in Delhi further cleared, they raised his allowance to one lakh rupees per month, all of which though came only from the pocket of Mir Kasim.

Shortly after, however, the fog lifted and an intelligence was received that the Abdali had left Delhi after nominating Prince Gauhar to the throne of Delhi. Ali Gauhar now became the Emperor Shah Alam II. Early in June, the British escorted the Emperor upto the boundary of Bihar to proceed for Delhi after he had conferred royal titles and recognition on Mir Kasim, and Colonel Eyre Coote who by now had succeeded Major Carnac, and after the Mir had paid him an amount of twelve lakh rupees as a mark of submission.

"The Mughal Prince's fresh invasion, his surrender to the English, his expression of dependence on them to help him ascend the Delhi throne, an announcement nominating him to the imperial

government while he was yet a guest or dignified prisoner of the English, the Imperial recognition accorded to him by the English by making him a handsome present, and by ordering (on receipt of the news of his nomination) coins to be struck in his name, had the inevitable effect of further humbling Mir Kasim as Nawab."¹

Both Major Carnac and Colonel Coote were bound in these circumstances to treat the Nawab only slightly. In fact even the private British merchants and the servants of the Company showed him only scant respect, for he was considered only a British lackey who could remain in his office only so long as the Company desired him. So long as the Nawab remained in Patna, the city gates were guarded by the English sepoys who would permit only such persons to enter or leave as were permitted by the British authorities. Ram Narain, the Deputy Governor of Bihar was supposed to be under the powerful British protection. The army officers in the province misbehaved. In vain did the Nawab repeatedly complain to Vansittart that the English "gentlemen" plundered the people and disgraced and injured his servants, for with his best intentions even the Fort William Governor could not persuade the members of his Council to accord him a better treatment. The Nawab's complaints they considered only as pretexts to encroach upon the British rights.

To add to all this was the behaviour of the *gomastahs* or such of the servants of the Company as actually sold and purchased the Company's goods. Sergeant Bregs reported to Vansittart: "A gentleman sends a *gomastah* here to buy or sell. he immediately looks upon himself as sufficient to force every inhabitant, either to buy his goods, or sell him theirs; and on refusal (in case of non-capacity) a flogging or confinement immediately ensues. . . (They) engross the different branches of trade to themselves and again, what thing they purchase, they think the least they can do is, to take them for a considerable deal less than another merchant and oftentimes refuse paying that . . ." Again: "Before, justice was given in the public *cutcherree* (court), but now every *gomastah* has become a judge and everyone's house a *cutcherree*; they even pass sentences on zamindars themselves, and draw money from them by pretended injuries, such as a quarrel with some of their peons." Every day "numbers leave the town, to seek a residence more safe."²

Majority of the members of the Calcutta Council were unsympathetic towards the Nawab. All the assurances, given by Vansittart that nobody would interfere in his administration if the payments due to the Company were properly made, were disrespected. Those whom the Nawab wanted to remove from offices for their inefficiency or intransigence often got into league with the British officers who openly interfered and made his working extremely difficult.

1. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-67.

2. Vansittart, *op. cit.*, II. pp. 113-14.

The misuse of *dustaks*, the passes issued by chiefs of the factories to carry Company's goods without paying any duties, as it existed in the time of his predecessors, continued also in the time of Mir Kasim. The number of cases where private individuals also carried their goods duty free by securing such passes from the servants of the company increased to such an extent that the State income from trade sharply dwindled. The Nawab complained and the Fort William issued instructions for strict vigilance against this evil, but all this proved abortive. Vansittart went to Monghyr and personally discussed the matter with the Nawab and agreed that henceforth the Company's goods should pay a duty of 9 per cent, while the Indian merchants would be charged between 25 and 30. It was also agreed that the disputes arising "with British *gomastahs* should be referred to the Indian magistrates, who, however, must furnish copies of the proceedings to aggrieved parties. Final settlement, if required must be left to discussion between the Nabob and the Governor."¹ The hostile Council however rejected this agreement and insisted on duty-free trade for the British except that 2½ per cent duty could be paid on saltpetre. Helpless Vansittart contacted the Nawab once again who, feeling desperate, abolished trade duties altogether. This made the whole province a free trading land to which again the Council objected, though Vansittart and Warren Hastings voted in favour of the Nawab. The free trading order of the Nawab continued in force for two years, due to which the Indian trading community became happy, but the hostility of the British increased. There are said to have been reasons why the majority of the councillors reacted so sharply to the agreement Vansittart signed with the Nawab. It is said Mir Kasim circulated the agreement to his officers, ordering them to expel any English *gomastah* who might violate it, before even the councillors examined it. Moreover, he aroused their indignation by exempting the private agents of Vansittart and his friend Warren Hastings (also a member of the Council), from this order. Vansittart was also to have accepted five lakh rupees from the Nawab when at Monghyr. In the long fierce meeting of the Council that followed, "Amyatt denounced Van's usurpation of power, Johnstone spoke of his 'black dependants', Carnac asked for the Patna command as 'the post of honour'. Batson sneered at the constant artifices of the President and Mr Hastings."²

When the bitterness of the Nawab increased, he complained in helplessness that the treaty which he had signed with the British in 1760 was not being observed by them; that the very force for the expense of which he had ceded his three districts, was being used against him; and that therefore the British had no right to keep the ceded territories which should be returned to him together with their last three years' revenues. But this too was in vain.

1. Feiling, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

2. *ibid.* p.48.

The hostilities had ultimately to come to the open. Differences arose at Patna between the Deputy Governor of that place and Ellis, the Chief of the English Factory who would not cooperate with the former and who seemed deliberately to have aimed at war, in order that the obstacle to the private traffic of himself and his friends might be removed."¹ The Nawab complained against his behaviour to the Calcutta authorities and requested them to recall him, to which however, the majority did not agree. The Nawab was incensed.

The Calcutta Council was getting seriously estranged against the Nawab because of his constant refusal to reimpose trade duties on the Indians. They decided to send to him a mission on which they appointed Hay and Amyatt, two of its members who were known for their hostile opinions about the Nawab. Such a mission was doomed to failure. The mission placed its demands before the Nawab in which they demanded that the trade duties should be reimposed on the Indians and the Company should be compensated for its losses on this account. It demanded proprietary rights on the three districts ceded to the Company by the 1760 treaty and release of the Seths whom he had imprisoned allegedly for their pro-British attitude. The mission also placed before him the lines which should guide the future relations between his servants and those of the Company.

The Nawab not only rejected all these demands, but also detained Hay promising to release him only after one of his own men detained by the Calcutta authorities was freed. This made the matter serious and on getting this information, as the Nawab wrote to Calcutta, Ellis attacked and captured Patna "robbed and plundered the bazar, and all merchants and inhabitants of the city."² The Nawab immediately retaliated and sent his men to stop Amyatt also from returning to Calcutta. Fire was exchanged in which Amyatt was killed. The Nawab also sent his troops which re-captured Patna taking Ellis and some other Englishmen as prisoners. And all these developments clinched the issue.

The officials of the Company once again had before them the prospects of a change in the office of the Nawab and the attendant benefits like grants, rewards and presents. Vansittart tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Council to arrive at a peaceful settlement with the Nawab. The Nawab was also advised by his Commander-in-Chief, Gurgin Khan, to go ahead with war which promised him the restoration of dignity and power.

The War

The Calcutta Council decided that Mir Kasim should be removed

1. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, p. 60.
2. Vansittart, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 330-31.

and replaced by Mir Jafar again on the Bengal throne. Negotiations were opened with the latter who had still been enjoying his pension granted him at the time of deposition. The agreement was struck, and Major Adams marched against Monghyr with his army of 1,100 Europeans and 4,000 sepoys, as against 15,000 strong army of the Nawab which met him at Katwah where the first battle between the two armies was fought on 19 July 1763. The British, as usual, were victorious. By 5 September three more battles had been fought successively at Giria, Suti and Udaynala in all of which the Nawab was humbled, and now feeling unsafe at Monghyr he decided to leave for Patna. On the way he put Gurgin Khan to death, for he suspected him of infidelity, little realising that it was this very lack of faith in his Commander-in-Chief that had brought him his defeats.

The command of the Nawab's army instead of being placed only in the hands of his Commander-in-Chief, had been divided into different hands. Mutual jealousies and the lack of coordination among his generals had spelled the Nawab's ruin. His Commander-in-Chief, however had throughout remained loyal to the Nawab and therefore it was a blunder on his part to have put him to death.

By this time, however, the Nawab seems to have lost his balance, though Vansittart still justified his action which could pass only as wanton cruelty. Reaching Patna, he had several of the English prisoners, including Ellis and Hay inhumanly put to death. Walter Rheinhardt a German in his service, who perpetrated this atrocity earned the title *Somru* (sombre). Some of his Indian prisoners like Raja Ram Narain and the Seth brothers, Raja Rajballabh and Rayrayan Umid Ray, who were suspected of complicity with the British, were also disposed of by throwing them into the Ganges. By such acts, however, he could not retrieve his sinking fortunes, and he had to flee to seek help from the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh whom he had already written to.

Events leading to Buxar

The final scene of this drama had yet to be enacted, and this was to be done in the battle-field of Buxar. Those who profess that it was the British prowess and superiority in the training of arms which won them an empire in this country, must know the course of the circumstances which led to the battle of Buxar. For therein lay the subtle forces which seem to be much more powerful than any one of the contestants, and which in reality seem to have shaped the events and their course as they happened.

As Mir Kasim was proceeding towards Oudh to seek help from the Nawab-Wazir Shuja-ud-Daula, the latter, together with the Emperor Shah Alam who was then camping with him at Allahabad, wrote in August, 1763 to the British offering to help them against the fleeing Nawab of Bengal. The English interests in the Court of Oudh

were, on the other hand, being well served by Shitab Rai, an ex-Dewan of Bihar who had been removed from office by Mir Kasim and had taken service under Shuja-ud-Daula. Early in October 1763 Shitab Rai wrote secretly to Mir Jafar to send a petition for recognition as the new Nawab of Bengal which he would get sanctioned by the Emperor. The petition was duly sent together with a *naziana* of five lakh rupees and promise to regularly pay a tribute, and Shuja-ud-Daula not knowing the initiative taken by Shitab Rai, started canvassing for its approval.

In the meanwhile however, Mir Kasim arrived and he was also received by the Nawab-Wazir with due cordiality and sympathy. Mir Kasim had at this time with him jewellery and cash worth not less than ten crore rupees, an amount significant enough to make the Nawab-Wazir have a second thought before he precipitated in favour of the British. But when the former pressed for an immediate action against the British so that they did not get time to consolidate their position in Bengal, the Nawab-Wazir replied that more pressing than that problem before him was the subjugation of Hindupati of Bundelkhand who had defied his authority. Mir Kasim offered himself to lead an expedition and set Hindupati right, to which the Nawab-Wazir agreed. Mir Kasim's expedition against Bundelkhand was a success. But in his absence the Nawab-Wazir proved his treachery by getting the *sanad* in favour of Mir Jafar signed, which was delivered to the latter on 24 March 1764.

On his return from the expedition when Mir Kasim found himself duped he put his turban on the Nawab-Wazir's feet and begged for his help for which he was prepared to offer him eleven lakh rupees a month to defray the expenses of his army, cession of the province of Bihar and three crore rupees as the gratification money after the war was successfully concluded. Besides Mir Kasim's success against Bundelkhand also had favourably impressed the Nawab-Wazir who opportunist as he was with the army and resources of the ex-Nawab added to his own began to feel the possibility of defeating the British. The Emperor's name and authority, though not resources (of which personally he did not have much), were already at his disposal. He therefore agreed to help Mir Kasim and forgetting his pretension of friendship for the British and the *sanad* that he had secured from the Emperor for Mir Jafar, he wrote in the name of the Emperor to the British to withdraw from all political activities and confine themselves only to commerce failing which they would have to face war and a crushing defeat.

But foolish as he was he did not know that the Emperor was as unreliable as he himself was, and that much before he wrote in this vein to the British Shah Alam had already communicated to them his state of helplessness, his want of confidence in the Nawab-Wazir, his offer of friendship for the British on whom, as

earlier, he was prepared to confer the province of Bengal, and requested them for financial help in the absence of which he was in great distress. The Emperor had written to the British that if they could defray his expenses, he was prepared immediately to march away to Delhi leaving behind his Prime Minister, Shuja-ud-Daula, for whom he had absolutely no sympathy.

The situation was very clear, and the British had to fight and expand their political influence in which success was assured, but in the absence of which their very existence in Bengal would be endangered. They accepted the challenge thrown by the Nawab-Wazir.

The circumstances were such as the British could not help the Emperor as against the Nawab-Wazir, but they took note of his intentions and tried secretly to keep him in good humour. A total of 19,000 British soldiers, including 1,000 Europeans, 6,000 Indians of their own army and 12,000 men belonging to Mir Jafar, marched. The invaders totalling 40,000 and ostensibly under the leadership of the Emperor, crossed the border and reached in the proximity of Patna without any opposition. In the neighbourhood of Patna, the two armies met on 3 May 1764 at Panch-Pahari. The Emperor was an unwilling partner in this venture. The command having been assumed by the Nawab-Wazir, Mir Kasim was jealous of having lost his initiative and had no faith in his benefactor. Raja Balwant Singh of Benaras, Shitab Rai and even Beni Bahadur—minister of the Nawab-Wazir were all ostensibly fighting against the British, but in reality in their correspondence they secretly sought their favours. The outcome of the battle was natural. The invading army was defeated and they withdrew to Buxar where they intended to stay till the rainy season was over.

In the meanwhile the Nawab-Wazir once again expressed his desire for peace, though he was not prepared to surrender Mir Kasim Sumro and, more particularly, some deserters of the British army who were now an important part of his war machine. On the other hand the British also had the understanding that any peace with the Nawab-Wazir would be against the wishes of the Emperor who wanted his ruin. Peace in these circumstances was difficult.

Battle of Buxar

Before however, the final trial of strength at Buxar came on 23 October 1764, both sides busied themselves in preparations. The British, were luckier. Some Mughal officers of the Nawab-Wazir, such as Asad Khan and Zain-ul Abidin, easily responded to the seductive offers of the British and joined them with their soldiers. Even the well-known historian, Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author of

Seir-ul-Mutakharin, who was in the service of the Nawab-Wazir, deserted him together with his father and joined the British, helping them also to secure through him the allegiance of Sahumal, the Governor of the fort of Rohtas. Nor did Mir Kasim himself remain with the Nawab-Wazir, for he was relieved of all his wealth and turned out to go into a wandering life and ultimately to die in Delhi in 1877 in a state of extreme poverty.

Despite all this however, when the hour of final reckoning came, the Nawab-Wazir's troops repeatedly pushed back the British army at Buxar. But treachery was at work, though it could not succeed as well at Buxar, as it had done at Plassey. Lieutenant Harper said : "I fancy, had one or two thousand of the enemy cavalry behaved as well as those few that attacked the grenadiers, we should have lost the day...The chance was more than once against us, and I am of opinion the sepoys would not have been able to stand the cannonade five minutes longer than they did."¹ The issue was decided in favour of the British within only three hours, and to them it cost the lives only of 300, of which the number of Europeans was barely 32; while the enemy lost 6,000 dead.

Marching ahead, the British occupied Benaras where they were given a welcome by Raja Balwant Singh and the Emperor. Shuja-ud-Daula, however, had not yet been completely vanquished. Vansittart retired to England in November 1764, having declined the offer of a donation through Nand Kumar. The British pursuit of Shuja-ud-Daula, however, continued. He was given one more defeat near Benaras on 18 January 1765 where in the midst of battle large numbers deserted the Nawab-Wazir who himself, however, still escaped. The British thereafter captured Chunar, where earlier they had received a severe blow. The Allahabad fort was also occupied, The Nawab-Wazir fleeing with the remnants of his troops, secured help from Malhar Rao Holkar, but the pursuing British forces defeated them both at Karra in April 1765. The Nawab-Wazir being insulted by the Maratha chief, decided to part company with him as well and abandoned all resistance to the British. In May, the Marathas were given one more defeat near Kalpi. And the Nawab-Wazir surrendered his person to the British, throwing himself at their mercy. He was, however, honourably received and restored as the Nawab of Oudh, as it will be discussed in the following pages.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BUXAR

The battle of Buxar marks one more turning point in the history of India, and is said to have brought about the third revolution in Bengal. In a sense more than one, it was more significant than even the battle of Plassey. Although both these battles were won

1. See Ram Gopal, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, p. 325.

by the British in similar circumstances, i.e. dissensions in the ranks of the Indians and their mutual jealousies, yet in its results the battle of Buxar brought the British a greater glory and prestige than that of Plassey. In the battle of Plassey the British were fighting only against the Nawab of Bengal, but in that of Buxar they were opposed also by that of Oudh who was also the Prime Minister of India: nay, ostensibly at least, in the latter battle even the Emperor of India was pitted against them. The battle of Plassey placed the resources of Bengal at the feet of the British, but that of Buxar delivered to them also the whole of the Oudh State. After Plassey the British became the arbiters of the fate only of one Nawab, but after the second battle, his Prime Minister apart, even the great Mughal Emperor lay completely at the mercy of the British.

After the battle of Buxar, the British now became an all India power, and their influence instead of being confined to the limits of Bengal, now extended right upto Delhi. Then, the achievements which the British made after the battle of Plassey were consolidated only by that of Buxar. In a way without Buxar, the victory of Plassey itself should have remained incomplete.

Estimate of Kasim

Before we close, it remains yet to say a few words more regarding Mir Kasim and Vansittart, their achievements and failures. Mir Kasim certainly was more daring, a better administrator and a greater organiser than his father-in-law Mir Jafar. He felt more acutely the need to set his house in order by introducing discipline in administration and by removing some of the snags which had hampered progress for decades. It was no little achievement that the treasury which was completely empty at the time of his succession, now at least half-brimmed with money, and in this he elicited the admiration both of friends and foes. It was not in vain that Vansittart gave him his support, sometimes even in opposition to his Council. Mir Kasim's capabilities earned him the sympathies of the British Governor.

Civil administration apart, even in the military organisation within a short time he achieved what was an envy of his opponents. He gave to his men guns which were superior even to those of the British. He disciplined and trained his soldiers in the European fashion, because he knew that the greatest enemies that he would have to face would be the Europeans.

Mir Kasim understood the need of weeding out those whose fidelity he suspected. He did not flinch even to attack and remove from office persons like Ram Narain, the Deputy Governor of Bihar who enjoyed the powerful support of the British. And within a short

time he had in all the offices that mattered, only those men whom he liked.

But there were limits beyond which he could not go. The practice of the British Company's *dustaks* and the malpractices of *gumashtas* were two of those evils without the removal of which Mir Kasim could neither establish complete law and order, nor sound financial position. Yet these were the two problems the very mention of which was bound to bring him into the bad books of the Council's majority. Though Vansittart and Hastings conceded that "it is not to be expected the Nabob will join with us in endeavouring to deprive every merchant of the country of the means of carrying on their business,"¹ The forces pitted against him were too strong to let him have his way.

Mir Kasim himself had some faults. For instance, he had a big harem and was physically a dissipated man, he was a man of suspicious nature who lost his battles because he lacked faith in his loyal commander-in-chief; and he was inhuman and excessively callous when he put his prisoners, both English and Indians to death by torture. Much of what he did, however, was his reaction to the conditions which the irresponsibility and recklessness of the British themselves had created. He could neither go far in his administrative reforms nor in his military organisation. For, the moment he tried to step out of the limits of mediocrity, the heavy hand of the British was bound to fall and mop him up. The British wanted a stooge, and not an independent ruler. Even without all the faults from which he suffered he was bound ultimately to fail because he was more efficient and more forward-looking than his father-in-law was.

When all this is said, let us not, however, forget that so far as Vansittart himself was concerned, he spared no efforts to help Mir Kasim through his problems. But his powers in the Council were limited. He has often been termed in the history books as a weak well-meaning man. Though to Philip Woodruff this judgment "seems not only crude but untrue,"² there is no doubt that in tact and courage he lacked the resourcefulness of Clive. Nor would it be easy to prove that he was more honest than Clive where money matters were concerned. For he did not lag behind in amassing wealth when he was in Madras, and that he was not incapable of using foul means in order to secure his purpose, is only too well proved from the way he collected rewards after signing with Mir Kasim a conciliatory agreement which was rejected by the majority in the Council.

1. Quoted by Feiling, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

2. Woodruff, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

Probably Vansittart did not belong to the times in which he lived. Either he was ahead of his age or what may look more strange, he belonged to the past. In India the rot had gone too far. There is no doubt that there were Johnstones, Hays and Bolts who were too greedy, unscrupulous and aggressive, yet it is difficult to understand how Jafars and Kasims could be saved in the midst of the indigenous forces of decay and dissipation. Though it may be unkind, and perhaps also odd to say, yet Clive's avariciousness and cunningness seemed to be more natural and in accord with the times than Vansittart's self-righteousness and forbearance.

Be that as it may, Vansittart's policy was said to have failed, and that is why in the midst of their cruel game of humiliating and brick-bating Clive they fell on their knees and begged him to go back to Bengal to set things right. Vansittart, however, became more popular when he returned to England, and thanks to the support that he got from Sullivan, an enemy of Clive and others, he became member of Parliament almost immediately after his arrival, and in 1709 he became Director of the Company. In the same year he was appointed one of the three Supervisors to completely reform the Bengal administration, the other two being Colonel Forde Luke Sraffon. In September they sailed for India, and on 27 December 1769 they left the cape. But nobody saw them again.

Clive landed in England in September 1760, as almost the king's wealthiest subject. It had indeed been a great achievement for a man who started his career as a writer on £10. Clive's fame had preceded him, and his merit was recognised by Pitt as well as King George II. An Irish peerage was conferred on him, which however did not make him a member of the Upper House. He used his enormous wealth, and at the age of 35 settled down as a member of the Lower House in England.

Clive, however, was not destined to develop his political position in England any further. Soon George II died and was succeeded by George III who in 1762 appointed Lord Bute, his teacher, as his Prime Minister. Clive enjoyed good relations with Bute also, but later on when the Treaty of Paris was signed (10 February 1763,) he voted against it for he did not like some of its clauses with regard to India. Indignant, Bute sought an alliance with Sullivan, the Chairman of the Court of Directors, and tried to bring about Clive's ruin. Clive's acquisition of jagir from Mir Jafar, as already referred to, was declared illegal, and he was proposed to be tried. But before the trial actually began, the circumstances took yet another turn, and he found the proprietors begging him to assume the office of the Governor of Bengal once again.

When Clive had left Bengal in 1760, he had told his successor Vansittart that the greatest danger that was to be dreaded in the country was the one that might issue from corruption and venality

which, in fact, Clive himself had founded. Vansittart "had no strength of character, no such persuasive powers as could win men to his side; no pre-eminent abilities, no force of will, such as Clive himself would have displayed, to suspend a refractory colleague."¹ Soon after his assumption of power, as we shall see in the following chapter, he replaced Mir Jafar by Mir Kasim, but within three years he got fed up with the latter also, and in 1763 deposed him and placed Mir Jafar once again on the *masand* of Bengal. Mir Kasim fled Bengal and organised a confederacy of the Indian princes which gave battle to the British at Buxar in 1764, but was defeated. This made the British yet more reckless, and "reports from Calcutta showed that the combined avarice, greed, misgovernment, and tyranny of the civil authorities left by Clive in Calcutta had produced a general uprising."² Clive was approached by the Proprietors to go to India once again, and the case regarding his jagir was dropped. But he insisted that he must not leave behind a hostile court. Sullivan therefore resigned, new elections brought Clive's own supporters to the offices of Court of Director's Chairman and Deputy Chairman, and he was given vast powers to bring about reforms in Bengal.

1. Malleeson, *op. cit.*, 123 (Indian Reprint, 1962).

2. *ibid.*

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Lord Clive and his Second Governorship of Bengal

Born in Shropshire, near Market Drayton, in 1725, Robert Clive was "sent to four schools in turn, but he does not appear to have been much good at his books, and his father thought he would turn out badly." At the age of six we find that Robert Clive was a wilful and passionate child. He was always fighting, with a temper so fierce that he would fly out about mere trifles. He always had to be doing something. Several incidents are narrated with regard to his boldness and insubordination. He was "the ringleader of a party of boys in the town who used to threaten to smash the windows of the shops unless the shopkeepers would give them coppers. One day having quarrelled with a certain victim, they, by way of revenge, built a dam across the street gutter in order to divert the rising water into his shop. The dam burst, whereupon Robert immediately flung himself down in the water while the rest of the party mended the breach."¹

At the age of 17, in 1742, he obtained a post in the service of the British Company in India as a "Writer", and in March 1743, he left England to reach Madras only at the close of 1744, after a long and tiring voyage which completely exhausted his funds and forced him to borrow from the captain of the ship at a heavy rate of interest.

Then the duties in India which devolved on a Writer, were the duties only of a clerk, and not of a young man of combative energies as Clive was. Little wonder, he soon became despondent and we are told "how, one day, weary of his monotonous existence, and suffering from impecuniosity, he twice snapped a loaded pistol at his head; how, on both occasions, there was a misfire; how, shortly afterwards,

1. Gatty, Reginald, *Robert Clive and the Founding of British India*, London, 1927, pp. 99-100.

a companion, entering the room, at Clive's request pointed the pistol outside the window and pulled the trigger; how the powder ignited and how then Clive jumping to his feet exclaimed, 'I feel I am reserved for better things.'"¹

We have examined in detail the role that Clive played in the Anglo-French rivalry in southern India where he earned the title of the hero of Arcot. We have also discussed how when he came to Bengal, he "compressed into three years," in the words of Malleeson, "achievements the most momentous, the most marvellous, the most enduring, recorded in the history of his country."² Towards the close of 1756 he landed with a small force below Calcutta, re-captured that town from Siraj-ud-Daula, then occupied Chandernagore, and in the battle-field of Plassey he gave a new turn to the history of this country when Siraj-ud-Daula himself was sent reeling away to his death, and Mir Jafar, a puppet of the British, was made the new Nawab. His achievements during his first Governorship of Bengal have been already dwelt upon at length.

INTERNAL REFORMS

After being appointed Governor of Bengal for the second time, Clive left England on 4 June 1764, accompanied by Summer and Sykes, the two members of the Select Committee. When he reached Calcutta on 3 May, the following year, by that time Mir Jafar who had become Nawab of Bengal for the second time had died, and Nizam-ud-Daula, his illegitimate son had been placed on the throne (on 25th February) in return for his payment of twenty lakh rupees which were distributed among the members of the Council and the other accomplices in the task.

The Calcutta Council, on the eve of Clive's arrival, was composed of a President and sixteen members; but most of the members accepted agencies elsewhere, generally found scattered all over the province, while the actual work of the Government was carried on by not more than seven or eight of them at a time. The work naturally suffered. The evil produced, however, was "greater than would appear at the first glance. The charge of an agency was extremely lucrative in the opportunities it gave for private trade. An agent, who was also a member of Council, and who could always not only support his own measures by a vote, but could count upon the votes of his colleagues in that body, enjoyed practical immunity from inquiry."³

Below the Calcutta Council, the ordinary servants of the Com-

1 Malleeson, G B. *Rulers of India, Lord Clive*, Indian Reprint, 1962, pp 3-5.

2 *ib d* p. 108.

3 Malleeson, Colonel, G. B. *The Founders of the Indian Empire, Lord Clive*, London, 1832, pp 369-70.

pany exhibited no better character. "In every parganah and every village," as Mir Kasim had complained in 1762, "they have established ten or twenty new factories, and setting up the colours, and showing the *dustucks* of the Company they use their utmost endeavours to oppress the rayats, merchants, and other people of the country."¹

The corruption into which the servants of the Company indulged, assumed different shapes with different men.² In Burdwan, thus for instance, the Resident and his Council received an annual payment of Rs 80,000 from the Raja, in addition to the salaries they drew from the Company. Besides, they also shared with the Raja land revenue collected in excess of the Company's demand under the treaty. Thus the profits which the Englishmen here made were enormous.

The salaries of the Company's servants being low, there was dearth of honest and qualified senior persons to occupy important posts in the different departments. Junior servants occupied high offices and made illegal gains. Clive himself thus wrote in 1766 : "The business of the Secretary's department was committed to a youth of three years standing in your service ; the employment of Accountant is now discharged by a writer still lower in the list of your servants; the important trusts of Military Storekeeper, Naval Storekeeper and Storekeeper of the Works, were bestowed, when last vacant, upon Writers; and a Writer held the post of Paymaster to the Army, at a period when nearly twenty lakhs of rupees had been deposited for months together in his hands. Banians became principals in the several departments; the affairs of the company flowed through a new and unnatural channel, and your most secret concerns were publicly known in the bazar."³

With regard to Calcutta, Clive remarked on his landing there; it was "one of the most wicked places in the Universe. Corruption, Licentiousness and a want of principles seem to have possessed the minds of all the Civil Servants, by frequent bad examples they have grown callous, rapacious and luxurious beyond conception . . ."⁴

The administrative machinery of the country, when Clive arrived, was completely paralysed. When Mir Jafar became Nawab for the second time, he knew that Mir Kasim had not pulled well with the British only because he had been over anxious to reform the administration and remove corruption. He was bound therefore to be only a helpless onlooker when justice and law and order of

1. Vansittart, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
2. The luxurious life the Englishmen lived on illegal profits is excellently explained by Percival Spear, *The Nababs*, London, 1963, pp. 53-57.
3. Forrest, *Clive*, II p. 308.
4. See *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, 1962, p. 106.

the country was going to the dogs. When he died he was succeeded by Najim-ud-Daula whose only qualification was his ability to play thoughtlessly in the hands of the British. Thus, the Nawab of Bengal had almost completely absolved himself of the responsibilities of administration, while the servants of the Company had not yet in their heads to think of anything but the amassing of wealth.

Besides, in the military department the most glaring problem that Clive had to face was that of *Bhatta* which was an extra sum of money paid to the military officers as a compensatory allowance to cover extra cost of living when they were in the field. The practice had originated during the Carnatic Wars when Chanda Sahib and Mohammad Ali paid exorbitant amounts of money to secure the services of the English and the French troops. In the earlier days of the formation of the Bengal army, its officers got this extra payment called *Bhatta* when they worked in the field, and half of this payment, called half *Bhatta* when they were detached to an outside station, not being actually in the field. After the battle of Plassey, out of his gratitude for the Company, Mir Jafar bestowed upon his officers an additional sum equal to the full *Bhatta* which they got so long as they remained in the field serving him. What the officers now thus got, was "double *Bhatta*" in the field, and lesser amount when they were away.

The practice of *Bhatta* was continued by Mir Kasim when he came to power, but in lieu of this he assigned to the Company the three districts of Midnapur, Chittagong and Burdwan the revenues of which were to cover the required expense. Now when the Directors got the territories, and they knew that the money they did not pay to the officers, remained with them as profits, they immediately started issuing instructions that the practice be stopped. The military, officers, however, were bound naturally to dislike the reform.¹

Outside the field internal civil and military problems, there were the Emperor Shah Alam and the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh who had been vanquished in the battle of Buxar, and with whom a settlement awaited the arrival of Clive

Such was the situation in Bengal when Clive arrived in India. The way before him was clear, and almost the first reform that he attempted was to put a stop to the accumulation of offices in the hands of the members of his Council. He made a rule that so long as a person was a member of the Council, he had to remain only as such, and not to acquire any other office whatsoever. A Councillor must remain only a Councillor and an Agent an Agent, the two offices could not be combined. Under the new rules, thus, the Councillors had to remain at the headquarters and constantly give

1. See Forrest, Sir G., *Life of Lord Clive*, 2 vols., London, 1918, II p. 235.

their attention to the administrative and other problems. The exception was to be made only in the case of the Commander-in-Chief who would often have to go with the army in the field. The number of the Councillors was reduced to twelve.

"It was natural that his reform, bearing on its face though it did the stamp of common sense, should meet with opposition from without. That which Clive had not anticipated was that it should encounter resistance in the body of the Select Committee. In spite however, of this opposition, he carried it through."¹

Almost simultaneously with the above reform, Clive condemned the acceptance of presents and other benefits by the members of the Council from Najim-ud-Daula. He also criticised similar practices of the Company's officers at lower levels and insisted on all of them to sign covenants. The servants of the company thought that the orders of Clive to this effect lacked sufficient determination and the Governor would soon cool off ; more particularly because he himself had previously indulged in such practices, and even now at the time of his issuing the orders he was receiving an annual income of £30,000 from his jagirs thus secured.

Mr Johnstone, one of the members of the Council interestingly remarked : 'With regard to presents in general, we have the approved example of the President, Lord Clive himself...' To this, however, Clive replied that the times had since changed, that the receiving of the presents was not then forbidden, that the earlier ideas that Bengal had boundless wealth had not proved correct, that the present servants of the Company had gone too far in the practice, and that the overthrow of Siraj and the elevation of Mir Jafar had been the work of the people of Bengal themselves in which the British acted only as auxiliaries.

But, writes Malleeson, here "he chose to forget the negotiations with Amichand, the conspiracy with the chiefs of the army, the sums which were paid him, not by the people, but by ambitious chiefs working for their own interest; that immediate result had been enormously to increase the burdens pressing on people."² Be that as it may, there was no escape, and the covenants had to be signed against the existing malpractices.

The salaries of the servants of the Company were absurdly low, and even a member of the Council did not get more than £300 a year. The Directors refused to give a consideration to the fact, with the result that the servants were left with no option but to supplement their income by indulging in illegal private trade. The Company's name and passes for the transport of merchandise had been so much abused that often even the Indians in Calcutta and the vicinity dressed

1. Malleeson, *Lord Clive*, London, 1882, pp 369-70.

2. *ibid.* 363,

their servants as sepoy, and using forged passes or even without passes, they conveyed their goods across the custom line. Mir Kasim had insisted on the removal of such irregularities thus inviting his own ruin. Clive, however, handled the situation better than Vansittart and in consultation with the Select Committee he issued orders under which the issuing of passes was now restricted only to certain authorities and the abuse indulged into by the Indians was put a stop to.

The effect of these reforms was that the illegal profits and gains which the servants of the Company made, now considerably dwindled. This brought about disaffection. When Clive started replacing the junior servants occupying high offices by senior officers whose services were requisitioned from Madras the disaffection was felt more. It produced an uproar, and the servants began to organise protests. An association sprang up among them, they boycotted Clive's entertainments. Memorials were drawn up and presented to Clive. The latter, however, was not a weak man, and "when the malcontents found that they were promptly deprived of every lucrative office, refused passes, and sent hither and thither very much against their liking, they concluded at last that they had better put up with Clive's tyranny, and the opposition died down"¹

At the same time Clive was also interested in enhancing the emoluments of the Company's servants so that any inducement to corruption should be removed. For this purpose Clive set up a 'Society for Trade' to be controlled by his Council. The senior military and civil servants were invited to purchase shares in the society which was to manage the salt monopoly, already with the Company, in such a way as would assure adequate, and even handsome income to the servants, reducing at the same time the price of salt for the Indians by more than ten per cent of the average that obtained during the preceding twenty years. The extra allowance which the senior servants of the Company were thus to make, without the appearance of coming from the Company's revenues, was about £7,000 per annum for a Colonel while a Lieutenant-Colonel and Major would make £3,000 and £2,000 respectively.

When the scheme came to the knowledge of the Directors, they ordered Clive immediately to wind up the Society. In vain did Clive argue that it did not amount to continuing the vices of the private trade which the Directors were now anxious to abolish, and that the new scheme would not raise any trouble with the Nawab. Clive twice unsuccessfully suspended the Directors' orders in the hope that when he returned to England he would persuade them to agree. The Society had ultimately to be wound up. "In this matter, Clive has been unduly blamed. His proposals...amounted to just that measure of reform for which Cornwallis has received such high praise."²

1. *The Cambridge History of India*, V, p, 178.

2. *ibid.*, p, 178.

In the Military department Clive attacked the problem of *Bhatta*. A regulation was promulgated so that the officers posted outside the limits of Bengal and Bihar would continue to enjoy double *Bhatta*, but those marching or in the field within the provinces would get single *Bhatta*, while only half *Bhatta* would be allowed to those who remained in the cantonments of Monghyr and Patna. At the Presidency or the factories immediately subordinate to it, there would be no *Bhatta* at all, though in lieu of it free quarters would be furnished. The respective rates of *Bhatta* for a Captain for instance in the first three categories were to be Rs 12, 6 and 3.

Now was the turn of the military officers to start an agitation. They simultaneously started resigning their commissions. Treaties with the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab-Wazir¹ had just been concluded. The Maratha army, 60,000 strong, was threatening and as many as nineteen-twentieths of the officers were prepared to resign. The situation indeed was serious. But Clive acted with a determination. "Every resignation was to be accepted; supplies of officers were requested from Madras; everyone displaying the least inclination to mutiny was to be sent down at once to Calcutta. Clive visited the headquarters of the three brigades in person, to ensure himself that the men were under control. The officers gradually fell out among themselves."² As the mutiny broke down, Clive showed no passion for revenge. The least guilty were permitted to come back on the condition that they signed a three years' agreement so that under the East India Mutiny Act if they acted like that again, they were to earn a penalty upto death.

The Mutiny of the army officers failed for three reasons : first because Clive acted promptly ; second because the mutineers, being too sure of their success, lacked thoroughness and did not try to draw their men into revolt with themselves; and third because Clive's attitude instead of being revengeful, was of mercy tempering justice.³ At his death Mir Jafar was said to have left five lakh rupees for Clive whice he diverted to the welfare of the army officers. Those who were compelled to resign because of their being wounded, or being in ill-health, were to receive some relief from this fund which was vested in trustees. Thus the fund served till the scheme of pension was adopted.

THE EXTERNAL POLICY

In his foreign relations Clive had to deal with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh both of whom, after the battle of Buxar, as discussed in the following chapter, were completely at the mercy of the British.

1. See the following pages.

2. Cambridge, *op cit.*, p. 179.

3. Malleeson, *Lord Clive*, London, 1882, pp. 401-402.

As Oudh lay prostrate before Vansittart, he had promised to hand it over to the Mughal Emperor. But Clive thought that this promise was wrong as Shah Alam was incapable of holding large territories in the face of internal enemies and external dangers. He therefore entered into negotiations with Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab-Wazir, as a result of which a treaty was concluded at Allahabad in August 1765.

Under this treaty Shuja-ud-Daula was restored to his possessions in Oudh. The fortress of Chunar, however, was ceded to the British, and the territories of Kora and Allahabad were also taken away from him. The Nawab-Wazir was to pay to the British an indemnity of fifty lakh rupees, and never again to give protection to or employ Mir Kasim or Somru. A defensive alliance was signed under which the British undertook the responsibility of defending Oudh, the Nawab-Wazir defraying the expenses of the British troops. The Raja of Benaras, a friend of the British, was to retain his possessions as a subordinate of the Nawab-Wazir.

Clive also wanted in this treaty a permission for the British to establish factories in and trade throughout the dominions of Oudh. The Nawab-Wazir, however, objected saying that he had before him the example of Calcutta where nine years before they had only a small factory which by then had swallowed up all the three provinces of Bengal. Clive did not insist and this clause was not incorporated in the treaty.

At the same time Clive had an audience with the Mughal Emperor with whom he orally discussed the mutual gains. After that he presented two petitions, one for the grant of Diwani, or the collection of the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, to the British; and the second for the confirmation of Najim-ud-Daula as the new Nawab of these provinces.

“The emperor, who was homeless and resourceless, and had been practically a prisoner of Shuja-ud-Daula since 1761, was provided with home...On 12th August 1765, the Emperor took his seat on an improvised throne in Clive's tent, and in a formal ceremony granted the documents the Fort William Governor applied for.” In return for this Clive transferred to the Emperor the fertile provinces of Kora and Allahabad which yielded an annual revenue of 28 lakh rupees. Besides, in recognition of Shah Alam as the Emperor of India, the Company would pay him an annual tribute of 26 lakh rupees.

“It was the most ludicrous performance ever witnessed in an imperial court. An emperor, without an iota of empire in his possession, without adequate wherewithal to support himself, and dependent on a foreign trading company, issues a writ, not to beguile himself or that company, but the people who, in their ignorance, still believed

that he really held the sceptre and therefore the right to collect the revenues or nominate an agent to collect them!"¹

Divergent views have been expressed about the settlement of Allahabad that Clive made with Shah Alam and the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. Sir Eyre Coote thus held that it was a great opportunity which Clive missed. It was no use propping up the defunct rulers. Instead of rehabilitating Shuja-ud-Daula, he should have occupied Oudh himself, and in the name of the Mughal Emperor marched direct to Delhi where he could establish his authority.

The other view, however, is that Clive's treatment of the Emperor was too harsh. Vansittart had promised to surrender Oudh to him, but Clive broke that promise and returned Oudh to Shuja-ud-Daula instead.

Clive's defence, however, was that his treatment of the Emperor was neither generous, nor harsh. It was not harsh because Vansittart had not entered into any written agreement to surrender Oudh to the Emperor. Nor did the generosity lie in the fact that the Emperor should have been burdened with a responsibility which he was incapable of bringing to fulfilment. In a State paper which Clive wrote before his departure, he expressed himself thus : "Our possessions should be bounded by the provinces." "We should studiously maintain peace : it is the groundwork of our prosperity. Never consent to act offensively against any powers except in defence of our own, the King's or the Nawab-Wazir's dominions, as stipulated by treaty; and, above all things, be assured that a march to Delhi would be not only a vain and fruitless project, but attended with destruction to your own army,² and perhaps put an end to the very existence of the Company in Bengal."

The following arguments may be forwarded in defence of Clive : The three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had only recently been acquired legally. The gains therefore made had to be fully consolidated before the Company entered into greater ventures. Secondly, the Company's resources, financial as well as military were already heavily burdened. The Company was mainly a commercial organisation, and as Clive wrote to the Directors, "to go further is, in my opinion, a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd that no Governor and council in their senses can adopt, unless the whole system of the Company's interest be first entirely new-modelled."

Thirdly, the defence of the provinces of Bengal if directly undertaken, was already a problem of considerable magnitude. Militarily the British were not at the time well equipped to aspire for an empire in India. Nor, fourthly, such activities would have been conducive to

1. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-47.

2. Wheeler, Talboys, *Early Records of British India*, quoted by Malleon, *Lord Clive*, (Indian Reprint, 1962) p. 147.

the development of the Company's trade which was its main concern in the country

Fifthly, India was a vast country, and once the British had set out consciously to expand their political power, one conquest would lead to another which would tax not only the Company's resources, but also the Directors' patience which at that time did not seem to be so great.

The expansion, sixthly, of the Company's power at this time, should definitely have aroused the jealousy of the Indian princes whose united strength would have been too difficult to meet, particularly when the British knew that the greatest victories they had already achieved, were more the result of internal dissensions among the Indians than that of their own prowess or superior military discipline.

Seventhly, the *firmans* (the orders) of the Mughal Emperor and those of the Nawab-Wazir may be of little significance to the British Company, but in Paris and The Hague, where the actual position was little known, they were still considered with awe and respect. A sudden overthrow of the authority of one or the both should definitely have aroused also the jealousy of the European powers.

Eighthly, if the British assumed the administrative responsibility in Bengal, they would need a sufficient number of trained civil servants who were in short supply. The acquisition of more territories should have created serious administrative problems which it would have been extremely difficult to cope with.

Then, in the laws of England the Company was recognised only as a commercial concern. If overnight it changed its character and turned into a territorial authority, it would come into clash with those laws and create difficult constitutional problems.

Bengal was one of the richest provinces of India. Its wealth and resources would be sufficient to satiate the material thirst of the Company for years together. There was therefore no need yet to peep outside.

THE DUAL GOVERNMENT

We have discussed the revolutionary changes in Bengal that secured to the Company tremendous territorial and political powers which, however, it was not yet willing or able to handle. The result was a dual government or dyarchy which provided the necessary transitional period for the Company to mature its plans and ultimately assume full responsibility. It would be interesting briefly to review the circumstances once again under which this dual government was established and its consequences.

Acquisition of Nizamat

The intrigues and diplomacy through which the Company slowly acquired power in Bengal has been discussed. We have seen the circumstances under which Siraj-ud-Daula was disposed of and Mir Jafar elevated by the Company to the throne of Bengal in return for the grant of 24 Parganas and other rewards out of which Clive alone got as much as £ 3,34,000. Mir Jafar, however, had no head for an efficient government and when he was plagued by difficulties at the hands of the British who wanted their pound of flesh in the shape of an annual tribute not caring whether the Nawab's treasury was full or empty, the relations between the two deteriorated and the Company decided to enter into yet another conspiracy. Mir Jafar was deposed and in his place his son-in-law, Mir Kasim was raised to the throne. A new treaty was imposed on Mir Kasim in 1760 whereby the new Nawab had to hand over the three districts of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the Company, besides a huge sum of cash-money which was paid as a price for the English support to the Nawab. The Company, however, having already tasted the power of king-makers, they were not going to permit him to rule peacefully howsoever efficient he might have been. Soon trouble started with the new Nawab as well and the Company discovered that after all Mir Jafar was better than Mir Kasim and now the conspiracy was set afoot once again to bring about the required change. Mir Jafar came back to the throne of Bengal in 1763 and the old drama of repaying the Company with territories and cash-money had again to be enacted.

The English slowly spread their network of diplomatic intrigues and in February 1765 when Mir Jafar died, they got yet another opportunity in this direction. Mir Jafar's second son, Najim-ud-Daula, was raised to the throne and a new treaty was imposed upon him whereby the English were able to secure a price which was bound ultimately to reduce the Nawab to almost a cypher. The price secured was the assignment to the British of the Nizamat authority in lieu of fixed annual payment by the Company to the Nawab of 50 lakh rupees. The Nawab was to maintain troops only for the maintenance of internal peace, for the collection of revenues and for the support of his dignity. The control and the appointment of the officers of the Nawab also was passed on to the English.

It may be necessary here to explain what this grant to the Company actually signified.

The Nawab of Bengal had two powers to exercise : (1) the Diwani which included the functions in connection with the departments of revenue and civil justice and (2) the Nizamat which consisted of criminal justice and military power. When the Mughal power at the Centre had not yet declined, the Governors of Bengal enjoyed

the powers of Nizamat, while for the Diwani departments, a separate Diwan was appointed by the Emperor himself. When the Governor of Bengal declared his independence, he had assumed both the authorities himself although theoretically the Diwani powers he still held in trust for the Emperor. Evidently, therefore, the Nawab's parting with his Nizamat authority was a great step towards an ultimate establishment of the British sovereignty in Bengal.

The Acquisition of Diwani

In 1763, when Mir Kasim had fled from Bengal, he was determined to make one more attempt to secure his authority before ultimately resigning himself to his fate. He contacted the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh and the Emperor Shah Alam and the three powers united to march against the British, as we shall see in the following chapter. A battle was fought at Buxar in May 1765 in which the allies got a crushing defeat, thus adding very greatly to the power and prestige of the British. Shortly after Clive encouraged the fugitive Emperor Shah Alam to try to recover his throne. As a result of the high hopes he was able to inspire in the fugitive Emperor's mind, Clive secured from him an agreement in August 1765 whereby he brought for the Company the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in lieu of an annual pension of 26 lakh rupees and the districts of Allahabad and Kora as already referred to. This grant of Diwani by an Emperor who himself was a fugitive, may be considered meaningless, yet its importance lay in the fact, as Dr Ishwari Prasad comments, "that Shah Alam was theoretically and legally the Emperor and this gives a colour of legality to the Company's transaction."¹ If the grant of Diwani was legal, the Company had the power to enforce it on the Nawab of Bengal who already was nothing but a puppet in their hands.

Thus was the complete authority, Nizamat as well as the Diwani secured by the English in Bengal. A revolution had been effected for which, however, the Company had never yet prepared, having neither the means nor the will to handle the government duties. It was under these circumstances that a sort of government was established by Clive which is known as dyarchy or a dual government. Under this system the Nawab continued to handle the actual work of criminal, civil and police administration in lieu of a fixed payment by the Company. But the ultimate authority lay in the hands of the British who were responsible also for the external defence of the country. For the collection of revenues too, the existing administrative machinery was retained although the ultimate revenue authority passed on to the Company itself. Obviously, thus, two authorities were established, one being native, the other foreign. The foreign authority was supreme while the native was only shadowy. This was a government in which responsibility was held by the native administrators

1. Prasad, Dr Ishwari, *A History of Modern India*, p. 67.

while the authority was enjoyed by the British, or in other words authority was completely divorced from responsibility. Such was the system which was known as the dual government of Clive.

THE WORKING OF THE DUAL GOVERNMENT

Under the new system the government of Bengal remained almost as it was before 1756. In 1769 a measure was passed whereby the supremacy of the civil authority of the Council which it could delegate to any of its servants, was fully emphasised. In 1770 the Council's constitution was once again defined. The Council was to consist of 9 members including the Governor himself. The Governor, the Commander-in-Chief and the three seniormost members of the Council were to constitute a Select Committee which was given the powers to make war or peace, though in case of a commercial or a political treaty with an Indian power the final approval of the whole body had to be secured. The entire correspondence on behalf of the Select Committee was to be handled by the Governor, though it had to be kept within the knowledge of the Select Committee and its copies were to be sent to the Company.

The dual government as established by Clive had many advantages :

(1) The state of affairs as it was, the servants of the Company had not yet gathered a sufficient knowledge and experience to handle the Indian administrative problems. They were yet ignorant of the Indian customs and languages and having kept throughout the character of merchants, they could not be expected to change into efficient administrators all of a sudden. Under these circumstances, obviously, it was wise for the Company not to have assumed the entire administrative responsibility.

(2) Moreover, the Company at Home was still considered primarily to be a trading concern. For it to have assumed the direct territorial sovereignty in Bengal at this time was sure to bring certain legal complications.

(3) The dual government at this juncture was advisable for still another reason. The power of the European opponents of the Company in India had not yet been completely finished, and if the Company tried to assume territorial sovereignty in Bengal it was bound to invite jealousy and opposition of the Europeans which the Company was not yet prepared to meet

(4) Nor could the possibility of an Anglo-Maratha clash be overlooked in case of such dramatic assumption of territorial power. The Marathas united were yet a strong power and a clash with them had to be postponed for as long as possible.

(5) Then again it was also necessary to camouflage this transfer of power to the Company in order to prevent the people of Bengal from developing an impression of their being enslaved under the British whose administrative character had not yet been fully understood. Obviously under these circumstances the fiction of the dual government had to be used as an artifice to throw dust into the eyes of the Indian people, the other European powers and the authorities in England (6) Again the system as it was established was also advisable inasmuch as it defined the respective powers and positions of the Company and the Nawab, thereby completely removing any possibility of a future conflict between the two. This lack of definition had previously involved the politics of Bengal into very violent revolutions. One Nawab was replaced by another and wars were fought involving considerable bloodshed. By the establishment of this system all such possibilities were now removed forever. Such thus were the merits of the dual government which was "designed to secure the full control of Bengal. . . so far as the Company's interest went without incurring the inconvenience of formal dominion."¹

The system, however, had many disadvantages also.

(1) The type of Government that was now established left the rights and duties of the Company's servants entirely undefined. An effort was made to forbid them from supplementing their existing salaries through profits, trade or presents received from the local chiefs by ordering them to sign new contracts. But the salaries of the Company's servants being too low, the effort did not succeed. Clive tried to handle the problem by organising a society for trade, to which the monopoly in salt was given, and the profits from which would compensate the military and civil officers for their existing low remuneration. The Directors however disallowed this proposal and the position of the servants was permitted to continue as ambiguous as it ever was. The Company having no powers to inspire moderation in the hearts of its servants, through profit, trade and illegal means continued enriching themselves. The growing fortunes of the servants made their jobs yet more attractive and the Company was stormed with recommendations even from as high an authority as the royal family itself, for securing jobs to their relatives. The huge wealth brought through the Company's servants was used in purchasing seats in the Commons, thereby seriously offending the existing feudal powers. Nor was the overbearing character of the Company's rich ex-servants something which could easily be put up with.

(2) The growing fortunes of the Company's servants naturally developed a desire among the proprietors to get their dividends raised and while in 1766 they demanded a raise in this connection from 6 to 10%, in 1767 they demanded the dividends to be as high as 12½%.

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 177.

Although the Parliament intervened to rule out the demand for 12½% and imposed certain more restrictions on such disgraceful activities of the proprietors, yet the exploitation of Bengal due to such unreasonable demands continued.

(3) Nor did the State itself remain behind. In 1767 an annual payment of £4,00,000 was demanded for two years in return for an authority for the Company to retain its existing revenues and territorial acquisitions. The pressure of demands on the Company for a share in booty was indeed so heavy that in the words of Bolts "while the nation was grazing after the fruit, the Company and their substitutes were suffered to be rooting up the tree."¹ The Company had to maintain an army of 40,000 employees, pay annual subsidies to the Indian chiefs and the Emperor amounting to £1,000,000 and make heavy payments to the Home Government to retain its powers and privileges. But its resources were not as rich as it was supposed. It soon ran into debt which rose to the figure of £6,000,000. The Company's revenues fell short of the annual estimates and instead of there being an increase, there was a decline. Of late the land in the country had frequently been changing hands, which was bound to bring about a deterioration in its cultivation thereby affecting the Company's revenues.

(4) Nor was the curious amalgamation of the political with the commercial interests destined to give to the people of India an efficient government. The responsibility had been saddled on the Nawab, while the authority rested in the hands of the Governor-in-Council. All this, rightly comments Kaye, "made confusion more confounded and corruption more corrupt."² The Company was concerned only with the collection of revenues, the welfare of the people being the headache of the Nawab and the other Indian officers. Under these circumstances an oppression particularly of the peasantry was bound to become rampant and the Resident at Murshidabad could not be wrong when he commented in 1769 : "This country which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary Government, is verging towards its ruin. . ."³

The Governors who succeeded Clive lacked the calibre of the founder of the dual government. Verelst tried to improve the situation in 1769 by appointing an English Supervisor over every district to guide and advise the local officials. But this practice was bound to fail; for, first, the newly appointed Supervisors considered their appointment only the best mode of developing a control over the trade of their respective districts, and secondly, their interference for selfish motives was resented by the local officials. Nor could the institution of the Controlling Councils of revenue for Murshidabad

1. Bolts *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, p. 79.

2. Kaye, Sir John, *Administration of the East India Company*, p. 231.

3. Ramsay Muir, *Making of British India*, p. 93.

and Patna in 1770 and a Controlling Committee of revenue with a Controlling Committee of accounts established in 1771 at Calcutta, improve the situation.

The department of government which suffered the most under the new system was the Judicial. Completely ignorant of the native customs and practices, the English servants of the Company frequently made their obnoxious interference and made an efficient administration of justice utterly difficult. The Nawab's servants were overawed and they suffered under the tyranny of the Englishmen seeking private gains.

(5) The Indian industry suffered just as did the Indian agriculture. The Indian silk winders were forced to work in the Company's factories. Emphasis was laid on the production of raw silk rather than on the manufacture of silk fabrics. The consequences were natural. In 1770 the whole country of Bengal fell under an appalling famine. Of its total population which was about 15 million, at least a fifth perished.

The Deputy Nawab rather raised the assessment by 10% to cover the losses suffered in the wholesale depopulation, while the servants of the Company made profits in the trade of the necessities. Nobody felt any pain at the horrors of the famine which John Shore later on described as follows:

In wild confusion, dead and dying lie:—
Hark to jackal's yell and vulture's cry,
The dog's fell howl, as in the glare of day,
They riot unmolested on their prey!

ABOLITION OF THE DUAL GOVERNMENT

Everybody was enriching himself at the cost of the Company, but the Company itself fell into debt. The Directors thought that the major cause of their decreasing profits was that their revenues were being intercepted in India by the native agents. An effort was therefore made in 1769 to appoint English Supervisors over the Indian district officers. But, as already referred to, this scheme failed and ultimately in 1771 the Directors decided to stand forth as Diwans and take upon themselves the entire responsibility of the management and collection of the Indian revenues. Warren Hastings was appointed for the task. He, as according to Lord Thinlow, came "to destroy the whole fabric of the double government—he was to form a system for the government of Bengal, under instructions so general that I may fairly say, the whole plan was left to his

judgement and discretion.”¹

Immediately after his arrival in India, Hastings removed the Naib Diwan from his office and constituted the President and the Council into a Board of Revenue. The treasury was shifted from Murshidabad to Calcutta and the district Supervisors were converted into Collectors, the declared duty of the native officers who were now named Diwans, being to assist the Collectors. The Judicial machinery of the country was also reorganised. Every district was given a civil court termed as the Diwani Adalat which was to be presided over by the Collector who would be assisted by the Indian district officers. A separate criminal court was also given to every district under the name of the Faujdari Adalat. This court was to be presided over by the Qazi, who would be supervised by the Collector and assisted by a Mufti and two Maulvis. At the headquarters two superior courts were established : Sadar Diwani Adalat presided over by the Governor and the Council, and the Sadar Nizamat Adalat to be presided by Darogah-i-adalat who would be controlled by the Governor and the Council and assisted by the Head Qazi, the Mufti and the three other eminent Maulvis. The Sadar Diwani Adalat was to hear appeals from the District Diwani Adalats while from the District Faujdari Adalats the appeal could be carried to the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. Such were thus the changes introduced by Hastings signifying the entire assumption of the Government by the Company itself. The revolution in Bengal was thus consummated.

A “heaven-born general,” as Pitt called him, Clive was an untrained writer-turned-soldier who more by his recklessness and dash than conscious military planning accomplished such wonders in the military ventures of the British in India as stunned them into empire-building activities, the possibilities of which they had never realised before. His capture and defence of Arcot in 1751, his having frustrated all designs of Dupleix in the Deccan, his cooperation with the Marathas in 1756 to destroy the pirate stronghold of Gheria, and finally his recapture of Calcutta and the defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula in the Battle of Plassey showed in him the talents of a general who could quickly grasp a situation and win battles not only by force, but also by intrigues and by sowing or fanning dissensions in the ranks of his enemy.

If during his first Governorship of Bengal Clive laid the foundations of the British Empire in India, during his second Governorship he strengthened them further as a statesman who is cautious, but firm, and who instead of grasping at the immediate illusory gains, prefers to wait till the opportunity itself matures and offers firm ground to proceed. The settlement that he made with the Nawab-

Wazir of Oudh and the Emperor Shah Alam, was wise. Oudh was a better protected buffer State between the British and the Marathas rather than a part of the British dominions in Bengal. He understood the risks involved in its annexation and in marching to Delhi, and he did not take a hasty step towards that direction.

His refusal to assume responsibility also when he had secured authority over the administration of Bengal was another step of a statesman which merits only appreciation. A shock-absorber was needed both for the Indians and the jealous eyes of the Europeans, and Clive's Dual Government in Bengal met that requirement.

Nor were his administrative achievements in Bengal less praiseworthy. He, in the words of Sir William Hunter, "desired to purify the Company's service by prohibiting illicit gains and by guaranteeing a reasonable pay from honest sources."¹ And towards this direction he took some such daring steps which even violent protests and mutinies could not force him to retrace. If his new scheme for trade-monopoly in salt was not accepted because of the possibility of abuse that it contained, it at least revealed Clive's concern also for the welfare of the civil and military servants where he was ruthless in putting down their disobedience and irregularities. Clive was prompt, but had no desire for revenge.

Still Clive had his defects. "His piercing vision saw ends so clearly that the question of means often seemed unimportant. He was fundamentally honest, but his one-track mind could only see one issue at a time and his egotism prevented him from seeing the inconsistency of courses suggested by immediate necessities."² His conspiracy against Siraj-ud-Daula and the level to which he could descend by forging signatures proved that morally he left much to be desired.

Personally Clive suffered from too much greed. This may be proved by the fact that the second time though he came to Bengal to remove corruption and did take steps against it, yet he remained unscrupulous where personal gains were concerned. And writes Ram Gopal, he "did not have the patience to keep his avarice in check even for a month, and prepared a scheme which would yield him from month to month a heavy amount of money, in addition to the salary and allowances fixed for him by the Court of Directors."³

Lord Clive was the architect of the ruin of Bengal. It was he who initially started the practice of accepting presents and founded corruption. It was through him that India was firmly set on the path

1. Hunter, Sir W. W., *Annals of Rural Bengal*.
2. Smith, V.A., *The Oxford History of India*, p. 479.
3. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

to slavery under an alien rule.

Clive left India in 1767, with a broken heart, for no reasons other than a personal emotional character and the diseases from which he suffered due to over-work. Reaching England he again entered Parliament where he was both criticised and admired. In 1773 General Burgoyne brought into the Parliament a vote of censure, blaming Clive in three resolutions for his irregular and immoral activities in Bengal which had brought a bad name to England. Although ultimately a resolution was unanimously passed that "Robert Clive at the same time rendered great and meritorious service to his country," the criticism and abuse that was hurled upon him during the debate, left Clive very much a disillusioned man.

The treatment Clive received in the Parliament soon began to play on his mind and his health. "In December 1767 he was unable to write with his own hand and considered wintering abroad. He was suffering from gallstones, and to relieve the pain he now had recourse to opium. . . But his life was gone ; he felt ill-used and disappointed ; and the melancholy from which he had often suffered now affected his mind. In November 1774, soon after his forty-ninth birthday, he cut his throat in his sittingroom in Berkeley Square. He was buried in Westminster Abbey."¹ Shelley writes of him :

He has outsoared the shadow of our night :
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain
 And that unrest which men will call delight,
 Can touch him not, and torture not again.²

1. Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroy and Governor-Generals of India*, London, 1949, p. 13.
2. Quoted by Edward Gilliat, *Heroes of Modern India*, p. 40.

Harry Verelst

Harry Verelst was born about the year 1734 in an influential family. His grandfather had been Director of the Russian Company and was followed in this post by Harry's father who also for some time worked as a director of the East India Company. Harry himself, however, had been brought up by his uncle, William Verelst who painted portraits and was in the service of the East India Company. It was the uncle's influence and contacts which got Harry a job in the East India Company and he landed in Bengal in 1750.

After Siraj-ud-Daula was defeated by Clive on the river Hooghli, and peace was signed between the two in 1757 Verelst was appointed in charge of the British factory at Lakhimpur. This was probably his first appointment. In 1760 he became a member of the Council presided over by Vansittart. Verelst did not like Vansittart's action of deposing Mir Jafar and putting his son-in-law, Mir Kasim on the Bengal Masand, because he was able to foresee in the latter, a man of independent nature who would like to work as a puppet in the British hands. After, however, Mir Kasim became the Nawab, he did not want constantly to harass him, and therefore he often opposed the attitude of the Councillor like John Johnstone and William Hay whose whole philosophy revolved round personal gains. He did not like the illegal commercial practices into which servants of the Company indulged, and often supported Vansittart in his attitude towards the situation.

After Mir Kasim made perpetual grant of the three districts of Chittagong, Burdwan and Midnapur to the Company, Verelst was appointed as district officer in all these districts one after another. Working as such between 1761 and 1766, Verelst collected sufficient administrative experience. When in 1765 Clive established dual government in Bengal, Verelst was an active supporter of this scheme. He was signatory to a letter which Clive sent to the Directors, saying "We may...be regarded as the spring which concealed under the

shadow of the Nabob's name, secretly gives motion to this vast machine of government without offering violence to the original constitution...the Nabob holds in his hands, as he always did, the whole civil administration..."¹

APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORS

When Clive returned to England in 1767, Verelst succeeded him as Governor in Bengal. He continued the dual government for some time, but he was the first among the responsible British officers to realise that such a system could not go on for long.

The administration of the country, thanks to this system, had sharply deteriorated. There was no law and order, and justice had ceased to exist. Servants of the Company behaved in an extremely irresponsible manner, and the people were badly oppressed. The indigenous industry declined, and agriculture began badly to suffer. For all this the Company considered the Nawab answerable, but the latter condemned the British authorities who kept all powers in their own hands, and transferred only the responsibility to him. Verelst had an experience in the administration of the districts directly under the British control. He was therefore sure that only the extension of this administration to whole of Bengal could prove its salvation. Moreover, he was strongly suspicious that all the money being collected by the Indian revenue officers was not remitted to Calcutta. There was a lot of misappropriation, embezzlement and concealment of the actual capability of the revenue payer to pay the tax. He was sure that direct assumption of responsibility by the Company, while on the one hand introducing administrative efficiency, would on the other hand increase the Company's revenues.

In 1769, therefore, Verelst appointed English Supervisors, one each in 39 of the districts in Bengal. The duty of these supervisors was to map out the districts, distinguish different types of land and the titles thereon, to prepare revenue history and rent-rolls. They were also to look after the administration of justice and regulate commerce. This was indeed the first step towards the ultimate abolition of the dual government. There is no doubt that these Supervisors did not immediately succeed, for the land records were in the possession of the hereditary Qanungoes who were very much reluctant to part with any information. The Supervisors also instead of persisting in their duties, started indulging in private trade, thereby worsening the situation yet further. But, there is no denying the fact that the instructions prepared for the Supervisors were very comprehensive, and they prepared the ground-work on which the later revenue machinery was to be built.

1. Quoted by Woodruff, *op cit.*, *The Founders*, p. 120.
2. See following chapters on Warren Hastings.

THE GREAT FAMINE, 1770

As soon as the Supervisors were appointed, a great famine visited Bengal. Charles Grant who was then in Murshidabad gave an account of the appalling effects of this famine in his area thus : "The famine was felt in all the northern districts of Bengal as early as the month of November 1769, and before the end of April following had spread death and destruction through the three provinces (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa). Rice rose gradually to four and at length to ten times its usual price, but even at that rate it was not to be had. Lingered multitudes were seen seeking sustenance from the leaves and barks of trees...Fields were strewed, streets and passage choked, with the dying and dead...no endeavour was spared to bring all the grain in the country to market...the Company, the Nabob, the ministers, European and native inhabitants contributed for feeding the poor. In Murshidabad seventy-seven thousand were daily fed for several months ...but these good offices were hardly discernible amidst the general desolation. In the capital...it became necessary to keep a set of persons constantly employed in removing the dead bodies from the streets and roads and these unfortunates were placed in hundreds of rafts and floated down the river...and for a time dogs, jackals and vultures were the only scavengers. It was impossible to move abroad without breathing offensive air, without hearing frantic cries...there were persons who fed on forbidden and abhorred animals, nay, the child on its dead parent, the mother on her child.

"At length a gloomy calm succeeded. Death had ended the miseries of a great portion of the people, and when a new crop came forward in August (1770), it had in some parts no owners."¹

According to Sir William Hunter, the total number who died was not less than ten millions. One effect of this famine, as according to Charles Grant, an important officer of the company who later became Chairman of the Court of Directors in England, was that "the institution of Supervisors did not receive a fair trial because the famine coincided with its introduction."² But this seems wrong. For this was the best opportunity for the Supervisors to show their worth. But instead of trying to meet the challenge of the situation, they themselves fell prey to greed and the weaknesses of flesh. Grant's view just represents the typical thinking of a company official who rarely lost an opportunity to make his own future secure. Welfare of the people came in their scheme, but only last. When an objection, for instance, was raised against the spread of English language in India on the plea that it might lead the people to demand English liberty, instead of arguing that liberty and democracy were not to be denied to the people when they were capable of having them, Grant rather took

1. Charles Grant, *Observation on the state of Asia* p. 14, Quotes by Ainslie Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, pp. 35-36.
2. Quoted by Embree, Ainslie, *op cit.*, p. 37.

satisfaction in his remarks, that "spirit of English liberty is not to be caught from a written description of it, by distant and feeble Asiatics"¹ It is from this angle also that Grant's remarks with regard to what little was done to mitigate the sufferings of the people during this monstrous famine, should be examined. For the first thing that should have been expected of the British Company in these circumstances, and in which the Supervisors being men on the spot could play their role, if really moved by this appalling calamity, should have been the writing off or reduction in their demand on those who survived the calamity but were now the victims of its attendant after-effects of diseases and epidemics. But they insisted on having their pound of flesh, and the Nawab had to enhance his rates of revenue to compensate for the depopulation that the country suffered. For such was the effect of this famine that even thirty years after, one-third of the land had no hands to cultivate it.

The servants of the Company rather made fortunes out of the people's misery, by hoarding and monopoly, and even Grant had in 1792 to agree that such practice of the servants was "a foul stain upon the British character as the annals of any people can hardly parallel."²

As a result of this famine, a large number of weavers died, and the weaving industry of Bengal which had gained so much popularity in Europe, declined, soon to be taken over completely by the cheap machine-made fabrics of the Lancashire industrialists. Besides, large number of those who died being children, for at least a generation, the "demographic composition of the population was distorted." When horrors of what happened in Bengal came to the knowledge of the people in England, there was widespread indignation which was expressed by Cooper in the following words :

It is not seemly nor of good report
That thieves at home must hang, but he that puts
Into his overgorged and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.³

It was now realised that the dual government of Clive in Bengal, had failed, and the Directors must now stand forth as Dewan and take up the administrative responsibility direct. Feelings of the members of the British Parliament themselves, were clearly expressed in the extortionist activities of the Company's servants were declared a crime, and order was sought to be established where chaos and corruption ruled.

1. *ibid*, p. 154.

2. Quoted *ibid*, p. 38.

3. *ibid*, pp. 36, 38.

Verelst, like others of his tribe, also made a fortune before he retired to England. But much of his money was soon lost in the law-suits which Bolts filed against him. Last years of Verelst's life were spent in exile in Boulogne where he died a poor man.

15

Warren Hastings as Governor, 1772-1774

Born at Churchill in Oxfordshire on 6 December 1732, Warren Hastings was the second child of Pynaston who married Hester Warren, 'daughter of a gentleman who owned a small estate in Gloucestershire', in 1730 when he was only fifteen years of age. The young mother died when Warren was only a few days old, while only a few weeks had passed after his birth when his father, Pynaston, himself disappeared, later on to marry again, this time the daughter of a butcher. Warren, whom later on Burke referred in his distempered fancy as a man of 'low, obscure, and vulgar origin', was left to be brought up by his paternal grandfather, then by his uncle, Howard after whose death a distant relative, Chiswick, who was a Director of the East India Company, took him under his guardianship.¹

Passing through his village school, young Warren got his education at Newington-Butts near London, and then at Westminster School. In 1747 he topped the list of candidates for a King's Scholarship, two years after which, much against the wishes of his teachers who did not want to lose a good student, his guardian, Chiswick, sent him away to Calcutta as a 'Writer'. Young as he was, Warren Hastings soon rose through his hard work and good character, and in 1757 he was appointed Resident in the Court of Mir Jafar at Murshidabad. When Mir Kasim became the new Nawab in 1760, every officer of the Company around him gained through rewards and presents which the former distributed, but Warren kept "himself clear of all crooked practices."

In 1761, Warren was appointed as member of the Calcutta Council from which he resigned in 1764 to go back to England after a stay of fourteen years in this country. "In 1768 the Court of Directors, looking out for a trustworthy servant who would put

1. Trotter, L.J. *Rulers of India, Warren Hastings* (Indian Reprint, 1962). pp. 1-4.

things financially straight at Madras, appointed Hastings to a seat in the Madras Council," while the year 1771 was not out when "Hastings found himself appointed Second in Council at Fort William, with the right of succeeding Cartier in the government of that Presidency."¹ Sailing from Madras, Hastings landed in Calcutta on 20 February 1772, where on 13 April he received the keys of office as Governor from Cartier.

THE EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES

At the time of Hastings' appointment, the Governor's Council in Bengal consisted of 12 members, two of them with the Governor himself constituting the Select Committee. The divisions in the Council depended on the personality of the individual who headed the Government, and for Hastings it was not difficult to carry the majority along.

There are three categories into which the territories of the Company in Bengal at the time could be divided. First were those of Midnapur, Burdwan and Chittagong which the Company acquired in 1760 and for which it had to pay no revenue or tax. To the second category belonged Calcutta and the 24 Parganas, acquired respectively in 1698 and 1757 on which the Company enjoyed Zamindari titles and paid revenues. While the third category consisted of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as a whole, on which the Company acquired both the Nizamat and the Diwani rights in 1765. In return it had to pay thirty-six lakh rupæes per annum to the puppet Nawab of Bengal who carried on the administration on the Company's behalf, and twenty-six lakh rupees to the Mughal Emperor as a tribute. The Company itself received the revenues, disbursed them as above and enjoyed the surplus.

The actual administration of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa still being in the hands of the Marathas, was conducted by the two Naib Diwans whom Hastings called Nizams. In Bengal Mohammad Raza Khan occupied this office, while Raja Shitab Rai was the Naib Diwan of Bihar.

"For some years past the land revenue, the one great customary source of fiscal wealth in India, had yielded very little profit to the real masters of Bengal. Whoever gained by it, the Company were defrauded of their rightful share. The bulk of it was drained off by a few native officers, a number of Zamindars, or revenue-farmers, and a swarm of greedy underlings, at the cost not only of the Company, but of millions of helpless rack-rented husbandmen. After the famine of 1770 the collecting of revenue in many districts seemed like trying to squeeze water out of a dry sponge."²

1. *ibid.*, pp. 29, 41

2. *ibid.*, p. 46.

The two Naib Diwans themselves were suspected of illegal interceptions and embezzlement, and Hastings had instructions to remove them from office and to hold an enquiry into their conduct.

The Central Government at Calcutta in 1772 was weak. The Governor and his Council were the supreme authority, below them were the Boards of revenue at Murshidabad and Patna, and the last were the Supervisors who had been appointed in 1769 to control the Indian Collectors. In terms of legal and illegal gains, however, the office of the Supervisors was the most important while that of the Councillors the least. Hastings himself commented: "every man capable of business runs away to the collectorships or other lucrative stations. . . At the Presidency, where the best assistance is required, the worst only can be had. . ."¹

Under the Dual Government established by Clive responsibility was divorced from authority and consequently justice was denied to the people and the administration had gone to the dogs. Severe famine of 1770 destroyed one-third of the population and converted one-third of the land into waste. Lawlessness spread over the length and breadth of the country. But under the dual system, neither the Company thought it worthwhile to give its attention to these problems nor the Nawab felt himself in any way responsible for setting the things right. The Nawab's own house was rather in a state of disorder, and its reorganisation demanded the interference of the Company.

There were problems in the foreign department as well. The Maratha menace still loomed large. Shah Alam whom the Company paid an annual tribute, and who was more or less under the protection of the British, had been weaned away by the Marathas who promised to get back his powers in Delhi. There was every possibility of the Mughal Emperor being used against the Company.

Such were thus the problems which Hastings faced after being appointed Governor by the Directors who said: "we now arm you with our full powers to make a complete reformation."

THE REFORMS

First of all Hastings attempted some commercial reforms. The misuse of *Dustaks*, or free passes, which had plagued the mind of Clive and forced him to define the authority which could issue them, still persisted. Now when the Company decided to assume the direct administrative responsibility in Bengal, as per instructions from the Directors to Hastings at the time of his appointment, it was for the Company to find a remedy against the evil of *Dustaks*. Accordingly

1. Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, I. p. 300, quoted by Cambridge, *op. cit.*, V. p. 208.

orders were issued, and the practice of issuing these passes was stopped altogether.

Besides, before the arrival of Hastings different zamindars kept their own *chaukies*, or custom houses, with the result that goods passing through the territories of each suffered impositions and their prices at the destination were completely out of proportion to those that obtained at the station of their origin. Hastings abolished all these *chaukies* and in their place five Central Custom Houses were established, one each at Calcutta, Hooghli, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. Further it was proclaimed that henceforth all the goods, belonging to either Europeans or others, would pay duty at a uniform rate of two and a half per cent ; with the exception, however, of the monopolies of betel-nut, salt and tobacco which had to be given a special consideration.

Thus, the very reforms which spoiled Mir Kasim's relations with the Company and led to his destruction, were now carried out smoothly when the British themselves assumed the responsibility. These reforms gave a tremendous impetus to trade enhancing the resources both of the Government and the people.

Hastings also introduced some political changes of a far-reaching consequence. The Dual Government of Clive had outlived the purpose for which it had been established. On 24 April 1772 Hastings received a letter from the Directors announcing their intention to 'stand forth as Diwan', and to entrust 'the entire care and management of the revenues' to the servants of the Company themselves. This amounted to the abolition of the Dual Government, and Hastings was to take the necessary steps in that direction. He removed from their offices the two Naib Diwans, Raza Khan and Shitab Rai who were suspected of intercepting the Company's revenues, and who, under the instructions of the Directors, were for this reason to be prosecuted. A Committee headed by Hastings himself held the trial, but the charges against them could not definitely be proved and the two Naib Diwans had ultimately to be acquitted. By this time, however, both of them who had been kept in custody for over a year had suffered considerable privacy and humiliation. Hastings felt sympathy, particularly for Shitab Rai,¹ whom he restored to his former dignities under a new office of Rai Rayan. But due to his broken health the latter could not enjoy his new office for more than a few weeks. He died broken hearted.² In any case, it helped the abolition of the Dual Government in Bengal.

When the administrative responsibility was assumed by the

1. For Raza Khan, though charges could not be proved against him, still was suspected of corruption.
2. Later on Nand Kumar charged Hastings of having accepted enormous bribes from these men for their acquittal.

Company itself, there was no need of paying the administrative charges to the Nawab. Fifty lakh rupees annually promised to him in 1765 had already been slashed to forty-one lakhs in 1766 and further to thirty-six lakhs in 1769. The payment was further reduced by Hastings to sixteen lakhs only. He was, however, careful to see that personally the Nawab got rather more than before.

The household of the Nawab itself was reorganised. Munni Begum, the widow of Mir-Jafar, was appointed guardian of the little Nawab, Mubarak-ud-Daula who had lately succeeded to his father's office. Raja Gurdas, the son of Maharaja Nand Kumar who was an old enemy and future assailant of Hastings, was appointed controller of the household.

The appointment of Munni Begum who was previously a dancing girl in the Nawab's court, was bitterly criticised in the British Parliament on moral grounds. But the criticism was perhaps unjustified. Whatever position she may have held in her early life, she had been the first woman in Bengal for almost forty years and now deserved a better consideration than what her critics said against her.¹

As the Naib Diwans were removed from their offices and the powers and authority of Nawab himself were curtailed, the centre of politics shifted from Murshidabad, the headquarters of the Nawab, to Calcutta, the headquarters of the Company. It was therefore felt necessary that the treasury also now should shift from the former place to the latter. Moreover, in order to remove corruption and establish the supremacy of the Governor and his Council in all financial matters not only in theory but also in practice, it was necessary again that the treasury should be placed at Calcutta. Accordingly this was also done.

Besides, during his tenure of office as Governor, Hastings also introduced certain important changes in the departments of revenue and justice which would be examined separately in the following chapters, as we discuss his foreign policy in that capacity. A mention, however, must be made here of the Governmental control that Hastings established on the manufacture of salt and opium to make them a steadily growing source of revenue. All fees and duties on marriage were abolished, a bank was opened in Calcutta and Hastings substituted boards for individuals and divided his Council into Committees for the purpose of efficiently handling different departments of the Government. Hastings "created a postal service running as far as Patna to the north-west and Dacca to the east. He backed Ronnell's completion of his geographical surveys . . . He set about

1. "As part of a routine which Clive and Verelst had followed before him, Hastings now accepted at her hands some £ 15,000 as 'entertainment money' their"—Feiling, Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

restoring trade relations with Jedda and Egypt. He was discussing precautions against famine.. currency troubles as were more arduous. A deluge of many coinages from many mints. . . (He) fixed a standard rupee, and confined coinage to the Calcutta mint."¹

The achievements of Warren Hastings within the short span of two years and a half in which he abolished the Dual Government improved the Company's revenues and reorganised the judicial machinery can justifiably earn him the title of a great statesman. Yet, however, Hastings' Administration of the time suffered from certain defects.

Despite all the reforming zeal of the Governor, the services continued to suffer from corruption. For this, we may say, the Directors were answerable more than Hastings himself. For they were divided into two parties one of which resisted all such reforms. Most of those who indulged in irregularities were "found to be friends or relatives of the Directors of the East India Company. Hastings suppressed the traffic with a firm but delicate hand, while the question of punishment was allowed to slide."

Hastings himself remarked : "I will neither be responsible for the acts of others, nor stand forth as the general reformer, and make every man whose friendship and confidence are necessary for my support, my inveterate enemy "

Salaries of the Company's servants tremendously rose, but Hastings' justification was that there had been no diminution in the Company's revenues. If the people of Bengal had to suffer a heavier burden of taxes, that was not a matter which would merit his attention. Generally in money matters he was not supposed to be very strong or efficient. His own accounts were irregular and he entangled himself into complications, so much so that later on when he was impeached in England, his counsel found it difficult to defend him.

Hastings had his defects, but "what is also clear beyond any doubt is immense ability, the tact, the urbanity with which"² he carried out reforms in almost every branch of administration. He "accomplished so much in less than three years that it is easy to claim that he accomplished all."⁴

JUDICIAL REFORMS UNDER HASTINGS

While discussing the judicial reforms introduced by the British in India, it must not be presumed that before they started developing

1. Feiling, Keith, *Warren Hastings*, pp 100-101
2. Trotter, *op cit* , p 50
3. Cambridge, *op. cit* , V. p. 214
4. Smith, V.A., *op. cit.*, pp. 501-4.

their power in this country, they had already perfected a judicial system in England which they slowly imported to discipline the judicial practices of the lands they steadily brought under their sway. In fact in many ways the Muslim judicial system as it existed before the British acquired the Diwani and Nizamat rights in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, was superior to the system that obtained in England where till as late as 1790 the murderers were burnt alive and till as late as 1817 half-naked criminal women were flogged in the streets. The Muslim law had its defects, as it discriminated between a man and man and a man and woman, for the evidence of two women was considered as equal to that of one man, and that of two Hindus equal to that of one Muslim, yet it was the law which exhibited leniency where it was needed and showed "abhorrence of bloodshed" in general.

Be that as it may, whatever merit existed in the Muslim judicial machinery before the British, slowly evaporated as they replaced one Nawab in Bengal by another. They acquired all the authority in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, but shirked responsibility and established what was known as Dual Government. As a result whatever remained of justice was also destroyed and lawlessness became the order of the day.

Situation before Hastings

Conditions on the eve of the assumption of powers by Warren Hastings were precarious. Nawab, the supreme court of justice without whose sanction no capital punishment could be awarded in the provinces, and the Deputy Nawabs who exercised the real powers on his behalf, were all counting their days and possessed neither the will, nor an unhampered authority to make justice what it should be. Zamindars who administered justice within their own territories now turned into oppressors and tried to make hay while the sun shone, for they either were not sure of their future or there was no strong authority to check them in their highhandedness. Qazis, the doctors of the Muslim law became corrupt and lost character, and even Ghulam Hussain Khan, the contemporary Muslim writer had to say in his book, *The Seir Mutakherin* : "But now, since from the length of time it has become customary to put up everything to sale, the office of Qazi is leased out and underleased. We see everyday faithless Qazis who are ignorant even of the precepts of Musalmanism, take leases of what they call the Qazi right, under-lease them only to others, although their rights are no more than so many new inventions to torment the Muslims of this land and to extort money from them under a variety of pretences."

Nor could the Hindu caste courts and the Brahmins who administered justice to the Hindus according to the Shastras escape the rot. Corruption was rampant and the institution of arbitrators had fallen into disrepute. The Governor and his Council themselves often

interfered in the free working of the Indian courts and influenced them most brazenly to get from them the decisions they wanted.

Already before the arrival of Hastings, some judicial reforms had been attempted by the British, but while doing so they suffered from certain limitations. First that under the Dual system of Government introduced by Clive, they wanted to assume direct responsibility as little as possible; second they were always cautious that the commercial interests of the Company did not suffer in any way; third, they were hesitant to interfere in the religious beliefs of the people to which the civil justice was co-related; and fourth their own judicial principle at home were yet in a process of evolution, and therefore they had no set standards better than those of India which they should have tried to impose.

Working under these limitations thus, in 1769 they appointed English Supervisors, each in a district or more than one district whose main duty was to supervise the revenue collections and try to remove corruption therefrom. They were also informed of inequitable judicial practices which obtained in the country "The Company's government in Bengal, however, possessed no knowledge as to whether such inequitable practices arose from the original customs of the country or from the corrupt manners of individual judges. The Supervisors were instructed accordingly to enquire into their causes and to enforce what was justified on the law of the land."¹

Later on in 1770 two Controlling Councils of Revenue were established, one at Murshidabad and the other at Patna. Justice continued to be administered by the Deputy Nawabs but the Controlling Councils were given "powers of interposition in all matters of importance."² Under the powers thus given to them, these Councils adopted certain rules under which the working of the civil and criminal courts began to be supervised by them, and in certain types of cases the sentences passed by the criminal courts had to secure the approval of these courts before they were executed.

The cases with regard to capital punishment also began to be referred to the British Resident at Murshidabad through whom the approval of the Nawab was secured.

But all the changes introduced before Hastings, were rather only exploratory in nature which helped in the collection of information that later on formed the basis on which he introduced substantial reforms.

Immediately after his taking charge as Governor in Bengal,

1. Misra, B.B., *The Judicial Administration of the East India Company in Bengal, 1765-1782*, Delhi, 1961, p. 33.
2. *ibid.*, p. 45.

Hastings drew up a plan for the judicial reforms, the aim of which was not entirely to do away with the existing judicial machinery, but to make it more efficient and amenable to the British supervision and control. The Indian law also was to be preserved as far as possible. His plan consisted of 37 regulations, and under it the following judicial machinery was set up.

In each district there was to be a *Diwani Adalat* or the court of civil justice which was to be presided over by a Collector who would be a covenanted servant of the Company, the Supervisors themselves being now made Collectors. The Collector was to be assisted by Indian judges and other court officials. His decree was final up to the value of Rs 500. In each subdivision the farmers were authorised to dispose of cases upto the value of ten rupees, this being done to save the people from the inconvenience of long distances.

This was a significant reform, for whereas previously the judges were remunerated much through the court proceeds and illegal gratifications now they were to enjoy regular salaries which was bound to help in removing corruption.

Besides, each district was to have a *Nizamat Adalat* or a court of criminal justice which was to consist of a Qazi, a Mufti, two Maulvis and four Deputy Qazis, in addition to its clerks and orderlies. The District Collector was to supervise the working of these courts and see that in all cases evidence was properly collected and the decisions passed were "fair and impartial". Such of the court officers as were found accepting illegal payments were to be dismissed with marks of public disgrace.

Appeals from the district *Diwani Adalat* lay in the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* which was to be presided over by the Governor and two members of his Council at Calcutta. Previously this Court, which dealt with the civil cases, was quartered at Murshidabad, the headquarters of the Nawab. But Hastings thought that since *Diwani* rights had been transferred to the Company the headquarters of which lay in Calcutta, this superior court on which much of the efficiency of *Diwani* matters depended, should also be quartered only in Calcutta. So the Court was shifted.

On the other hand the appeals from the district *Nizamat Adalat* lay in the *Sadar Nizamat Adalat* which was to be presided over by a *Daroga-i-Adalat* who would be assisted by a Chief Qazi, a Chief Mufti and three Maulvis. Just as the district *Nizamat Adalats* were to be supervised by the district Collectors, so the working of the *Sadar Nizamat Adalat* was to be supervised by a member of the Governor's Council whose duty was to see that the decrees of justice "are not injured or prevented by the effects of partiality or

corruption." This court was also previously quartered at Murshidabad, but now was shifted to Calcutta.

"With the removal of the Sadar Nizamat Adalat from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1772 Hastings persuaded the mother of the boy Nawab to allow her consent to the nomination of a deputy to her minor son to reside in Calcutta with delegated powers and to fix the Nizam's seal and signature on his behalf to the warrants issued for the execution of the sentences of the Nizamat Adalat in order to prevent the delays caused by the process of sending to Murshidabad the *futwas* of the Sadar Nizamat sitting at Calcutta for the Nawab's warrant signature."¹

The shifting of the Sadar Diwani Adalat to Calcutta did not constitute an interference into the powers of the Nawab as much as that of the Sadar Nizamat Adalat did. Nomination of a deputy with his delegated powers to reside in Calcutta and fix the Nawab's seal and signature on his behalf to the warrants issued by the Sadar Nizamat Adalat was no compensation for the diminution of authority that he suffered thereby. Hastings' argument that youth and inexperience of the Nawab made it necessary for the Department to be placed under the British superintendence at Calcutta, could convince none. For if the Nawab was young and inexperienced, his Deputy Raza Khan at Murshidabad was not, for it was he who actually handled the authority. That the whole action was rather aimed at disgracing Raza Khan than at anything else, was proved later on when this man himself was removed from office, charged for corruption and subjected to a trial while his staunch enemy, Sadar-ul-Haq Khan, was appointed Daroga-i-Adalat to preside over the Sadar Nizamat. Reader may be reminded that the charges against Raza Khan could not be proved, and he had ultimately to be acquitted.

Further for the district of Calcutta the two courts, the Diwani Adalat and the Nizamat Adalat were set up on the plan of the other district courts, with the difference that in each of these courts a Member of Council was to preside in rotation. "In all these courts, it was ordained that records of proceedings should be made and preserved. The chout (*chaauth*), or exaction of a fourth part of all litigated property, for the benefit of judge, was abolished. A prohibition was issued against exorbitant fines. The discretionary power, exercised by a creditor over the person of his debtor, was no longer tolerated."²

The dacoits who infested the whole country were to be executed in their own villages, and if a dacoit could not be traced out, his village was to suffer a fine. The police officers who apprehended the dacoits were to be duly rewarded.

1. Patra, Atul Chandra, *The Administration of Justice under the East India Company in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, 1962, p. 71.
2. Mill, *op. cit.*, III, p. 530.

This thus was the first set of reforms in the judicial department introduced by Hastings, and it was a commendable attempt. The Muslim law with all its discriminative features, however still continued as the law of the criminal courts. The dacoits who infested the countryside, rather increased in their number, one reason for this being the fact that as a result of these changes the hold of the indigenous system further weakened, while the English system did not fully establish itself. Besides, certain recent changes in the system of revenue settlement dispossessed many zamindars of their lands and forced them also to join their profession. Such of the zamindars as still remained, were not sure of their own future, and therefore instead of helping to apprehend the dacoits as they previously did, rather helped them to escape, or even gave them refuge.

Number of prisoners in the jails tremendously increased, severe punishments could make no difference and it began to be planned that the prisoners should be disposed of as slaves.

Changes between 1774 and 1781

The Regulating Act of 1773 made Warren Hastings Governor-General of Bengal, and established a new Council to help him, but the majority of the Council members adopted a hostile attitude towards him right from the start. Raza Khan had been acquitted. Hastings' judicial changes were declared to be the cause of the increasing lawlessness in the country, and the hostile Council passed a resolution in 1775 to remove the Sadar Nizamat Adalat to Murshidabad once again, in order to 'recover the country government from the state of febleness and insignificance to which it was Mr Hastings' avowed policy to reduce it.

'Fortune again smiled on Raza Khan. He was reappointed Naib Nizam and guardian of the minor Nawab Mubarak-ud-Daulah. The Sadar Nizamat Adalat was removed to Murshidabad and placed under his charge.' All this was done against the wishes of Hastings.

Raza Khan was restored to his old dignity and power and soon thereafter he proposed a plan for the better working of the police and criminal courts, which was approved by the Council and ordered to be put into force. But his position was far from secure. He had been appointed in spite of opposition from Hastings. The Nawab was also coming of age, and he now wanted independence of the Deputy Nawab's tutelage. In 1778 the Governor-General managed to get him again removed from office, and Sadar-ul-Haq was raised from Rs 18,000 per annum to Rs 78,000 and appointed the Deputy Nawab instead.

When Sadar-ul-Haq was appointed the Deputy Nawab,

1 See Majumdar M, *Justice and Police in Bengal, 1765-1793* Calcutta, 1960 pp 132, 141

Mubarak-ud-Daula was informed by Hastings that while the dignity remained with the Nawab the power belonged to his Deputy in which he should meddle the least. In Sadar, Hastings found the proper man through whom he could get things done as he wished. But misfortune still dogged him. Sadar died in 1779, and the Directors ordered that Raza Khan should be re-appointed to his old position.

In the meanwhile trouble was brewing for Hastings in another quarter as well. The Regulating Act of 1773 set up a Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta with its four judges who were to be appointed by the Crown. The Court was given jurisdiction on "any person employed directly, or indirectly in the service of the Company, or any of His Majesty's subjects." The Act also imposed on the Court "the task of dealing with oppression in the executive Government. The nature and scope of the respective functions of the Governor-General and Council on the one hand and the Supreme Court on the other could not be clearly defined. The ambiguous and inadequate provisions of the Regulating Act of 1773 and the Charter of Justice of 1774 soon brought the Executive and the Judiciary of the Presidency into conflicts continuing in one form or another for about seven years till a new enactment was made clearly defining their respective spheres of action."¹

The Supreme Court claimed jurisdiction over the Nawab's courts, and it asserted; "Nothing is left to Mubarak but an empty title...(He) has rendered his power and authority in the hands of English Company." The Court encouraged cases from the Diwani and the Nizamat Adalats to be transferred to itself. It gave refuge to the criminals from the Indian courts and even served a writ of Habeas Corpus on Sadar-ul-Haq who could be saved only by the personal interference of Hastings himself. In vain did the Governor-General deny the interpretation that the Supreme Court gave to its powers and which brought the revenue machinery of the State to a standstill.

The institution of the *fauj-dars* also declined. The *fauj-dars* were the *officials* who used to apprehend criminals and put them up for trial in the Indian courts. But now when those convicted by the Indian courts began repeatedly to be set free by the Supreme Court, the *fauj-dars* were demoralised. The *fauj-dars* suffered from yet another reason. Previously the zamindars helped them with a share in their own revenues, but now when the zamindars themselves became insecure and their judicial powers were taken away, they were no more in a mood to befriend the *fauj-dars* and help them in their functions. The Company officials also often disregarded their

1. Patra, A.C., *op. cit.*, p 107.

authority. As the powers and influence of the faujdars decreased, the law and order problem became more acute.

Reforms of 1781-1782

The Bengal Judicature Act of 1781 defined the powers of the Supreme Court, and placed the Governor-General and Council clearly outside their jurisdiction. Within the Council also certain changes took place with the result that Hastings was now able to secure a more effective casting vote.

Under the new reforms introduced by Hastings on 6 April 1781, first, the institution of faujdars was abolished for they had failed in serving the purpose for which they were appointed. Second, the presiding officers of the civil courts were empowered to apprehend the criminals within the areas under their jurisdiction, and commit them for trial to the criminal courts. Third, the zamindars were also authorised once again to apprehend criminals and maintain law and order in their localities. With regard to the zamindars, a proclamation was issued that they "take effectual care that no robberies, burglaries, or murders, be committed within their districts, and that they do their utmost to bring all offenders to justice.. and it is hereby declared that if any robbery be committed, the zamindars to whose district the robbers appertain or in whose district the robbery shall be committed according to the circumstances of the case shall be made to refund the amount. But if any zamindar shall either commit or connive at any murder, robbery or other breach of peace, and it be proved against him, he shall be punished with death."

Fourth, a new department, known as the Department of Remembrancer of Criminal Courts was established at Calcutta under the charge of a covenanted servant of the Company. Every presiding officer of a civil court and every zamindar who apprehended criminals and committed them for trial to a criminal court, was ordered to send a report with regard to this matter to this department for record. Besides, the presiding officers of the criminal courts were also required to send similar reports with regard to the cases disposed of or the cases still pending. Through this department Hastings himself desired to exercise supervision over the criminal courts, and to that extent the powers of the Deputy Nawab were curtailed. This department was to coordinate the functions of the criminal courts, the zamindars and the civil judges so that they did not start working at cross purposes.

The powers of the Deputy Nawab were further curtailed who was now to appoint court officers only subject to the approval of the Governor-General and Council.

Some more changes were introduced in July 1782, when in order to reduce the administrative expenditure, the number of the criminal courts was reduced from twenty-three to eighteen, and each such court

was placed in the neighbourhood of a civil court for the convenient transaction of business. Besides, in order to help the magistrates to perform their police functions efficiently, separate magisterial establishments were provided, each of which was to consist of Nazir, a jail officer, some Muharrirs and a number of guards and watchmen known as Barkandazes who helped in the preservation of law and order in their respective districts.

The reforms of 1781-82, were again a commendable step on the part of Hastings to put the house in order. But some defects still remained. Firstly, the constitution and working of the criminal courts remained unchanged with the inequities of the Muslim law which they had to enforce, and with the out-of-date-mode of proceedings which was not yet reformed. Secondly, the non-officials, the zamindars, were entrusted with the police duties, but they continued themselves in league with the bad characters. To help them in their duties, the zamindars appointed petty police officers to work under them. These petty officers were not paid their salaries regularly, and even if they were paid, they were low, with the result that they began to fleece the people, and by such practices they made such amounts of money as made their posts important; and these posts began to be sold at exorbitant prices.

The powers of the Deputy Nawab, thirdly, were so circumscribed that he was made incapable of introducing any reforms, while the Company's officers still considered the criminal justice outside their jurisdiction. In the confusion thus created, the cause of justice suffered. Fourthly, the powers given to the presiding officers of the civil courts, were not commensurate with their responsibility, and often when there was a disturbance they looked on helplessly. They had no power to interfere with the criminal courts, and as they were foreigners, they did not understand the local dialects, or the local customs, with the result that there was delay in prosecution and justice suffered from other attendant evils.

Fifthly, the political power was sought to be separated from the judicial authority when the Sadar Nizamat Adalat was sent back to Murshidabad, and outside the direct supervision of the Governor-General and Council. The Council of the Governor-General, sixthly, was more a debating society than the supreme authority concerned with practical problems. Seventhly, the salaries of the court officials were low and the Company seemed to be interested only in starving the criminal administration of the required finances. Thus, during 1776-1781, the Company spent on criminal justice an average amount of 595, 125 rupees per annum. This amount which itself was not sufficient, however, was further cut down in 1782 to Rs 250, 488.

Lastly, Governor-General, the head of the Government did not enjoy powers commensurate with his responsibilities. Hastings wrote

to Lord North : "The meanest drudge, who owes his substance to daily labour, enjoys a condition of happiness compared to mine. While I am doomed to share the responsibility of measures which I disapprove, and to be idle spectator of the ruin which I cannot avert."¹

Lord Cornwallis later on completely abolished the control of the Indians over criminal justice, and removed the Sadar Nizamat Adalat once again to Calcutta. The zamindars were also relieved of their police duties, and the whole system was placed on a more efficient footing. But the foundations on which he worked and for which he earned the appreciation of all, were laid by Hastings himself, as Lillian M. Person writes : "Cornwallis built on foundations already laid or begun to be laid by his predecessors, and especially by Hastings. It was the emphasis rather than the principle that was new, and the strength of the home government was used to enforce it."²

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

When the British took over Diwani in 1765 there were three sources of revenue in Bengal : first, *Mul* which included land revenue and royalties on salt, second, *Salt* which included customs tolls, etc. and third, *Bazi Jama* which had to deal with miscellaneous sources such as excise and fines. Of all these sources, however, the most important was the land revenue which accounted for as much as 80 per cent of the total income of the State, and which will have therefore to be discussed in detail. A short account of the other sources may also however be given.

Salt. Salt production in Bengal had been a State monopoly in the time of the Mughals. When the Company took over the monopoly, we have already seen how Clive wanted to set up a society for trade in salt, which was to consist of the Company as shareholders and to be managed by the Governor's Council so that the servants of the Company whose salaries could not otherwise be enhanced, could benefit. The Directors disallowed the whole scheme. In 1772 Hastings was able to enforce Company's monopoly in salt, and the Directors agreed. The monopoly, however, did not prove profitable, and it had to be given up in 1777 in favour of farming out salt production in return for cash payments. This practice also was brought to an end in 1780 and a Salt Office was established in which covenanted servants of the Company were appointed to supervise the production of salt at prices fixed by the Governor General-in-Council.

Customs. Before Hastings took over there were large number of *chaukies*, or custom houses, which were kept by individual zamindars all over the State, and which seriously hampered the free flow of trade.

1. Lyall, Sir Alfred, *Warren Hastings* (London, 1889), p. 336.

2. *Cambridge History of India*, V pp 436-37. Also see Misra, B. B., *op. cit.*, pp 337-338.

The evil was removed by Hastings immediately after he took charge as Governor. He abolished all these *chaukies* and in their place five central custom houses were established, one each at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, Dacca and Hooghly. In 1773 Hastings set up a Board of Customs to supervise the whole business of collection and management of the custom dues. Towards the close of 1774 the Board lost much of its importance, but its Secretary continued handling the business on its behalf till 1779 when it seems the whole work was transferred to the same machinery which handled the land revenue.

Land Revenue

The System before Hastings The three different divisions under which the system of Land Revenue Administration can be properly studied are: (1) the preparation and maintenance of records, (2) assessment and its methods and (3) the machinery for collections.

In the times of the Mughals the preparation and maintenance of records which included information with regard to the ownership of land its quality, rate and methods of assessment, etc., was done by Qanungos who probably were first appointed in the time of Akbar. The office of the Qanungos became important for it was they who kept copies of contracts between the State and the zamindars and kept a watch on the latter and the Amils the collectors of revenue, and were responsible for the regular receipt of the Crown's dues on the one hand, and the welfare of the cultivators on the other. With the decline of the Mughal power, the Qanungos became hereditary occupants of their office, and instead of looking after the State interests or the interests of the ryots, the cultivators along with zamindars, became an instrument of corruption and oppression.

With regard to assessment and collection of the land revenue we may content ourselves with the information that the first regular assessment of the Mughals in Bengal was made again, under Akbar, and the second was done in 1658 which continued till 1772. The collection of the land revenue was made by the Amils. In the frontier areas, the faujdars collected the State dues from the zamindars.

A few words regarding the zamindars who occupied an interesting position in Bengal. When the Mughal Government was strong, revenue used to be collected by salaried officials. But with the decline of the central Mughal authority the importance of the Government officials decreased and the collection of revenue now could be made only by such persons as had their own local influence, with the result that in the outlying provinces the revenue collection began to be farmed out, the farmers paying an agreed amount to the State and retaining the rest of their collections to themselves. With the passage of time these farmers who were variously termed as such or as talukdars or

zamindars, came to occupy a hereditary position, and about the time the British established their power in 1765, started claiming proprietary rights on land to the exclusion of the real owners whom they termed as tenants. The more striking feature of the whole story is that these claims of the zamindars were accepted by the British in the time of Cornwallis, as we shall see in the following pages, and thus mere collectors of revenue became owners of land, while the owners were turned into wage earners.

When the Company acquired Diwani in 1765, it was interested more in substance than form, so the actual collection of the revenue was left in the hands of the Naib Dewans, one for Bengal and another for Bihar, while the Company enjoyed only its fruits. Every year in every district dues were settled with zamindars and the Company knew how much money was to come. In Bengal the Naib Diwan at Murshidabad collected revenue and deposited it in the khalsa or the Nawab's treasury from where it was transferred to the Resident. For Bihar the money was received by the Company's Chief Representative from the Deputy Diwan at Patna and remitted to the Resident who thus acted as the "Collector of the King's revenue."

With the passage of time the Company's demands increased and the tenants suffered an increasing burden. The demands were never satisfied, and the British always suspected the Deputy Diwans and others of intercepting money, and the ryots of retaining more than their due; with the result that in 1769 they appointed district Supervisors to supervise collections, but mainly to collect information with regard to the real capacity of the land. The institution of Supervisors, however, failed, first because Qanungos who had the monopoly of all knowledge, were too jealous of parting with it; and second, because the Supervisors themselves became corrupt and busied themselves in making illegal money.

In 1770 two Controlling Councils of Revenue were established, one for Bengal, at Murshidabad, which was to consist of two members of the Governor's Council, and two other senior servants of the Company; and the other for Bihar, at Patna to consist of one member of the Supreme Council and two servants of the Company. These Councils were to supervise the conduct of the Naib Diwans and the Supervisors of the respective provinces were made responsible to them. The powers of the Resident were proportionately reduced, and shortly after the office itself was abolished when a new Controlling Committee of Revenue was established at Calcutta with duties to supervise the two Councils.

This was the position when Hastings took charge of the Government at Calcutta. Obviously, the existing system suffered from many defects. Firstly, was the position of the Qanungos without whose cooperation the Company could get no correct information

and therefore could introduce no reforms. The position of the zamindars, secondly, was confusing, with some Englishmen inclined to accept them as proprietors, while others considering them only as parasites who had to be removed. Otherwise also the zamindars were not in an affluent condition, for many had fallen into the clutches of moneylenders and were living far from an enviable life. Thirdly, there seemed to be nobody worried about the lot of the ryots, the real owners of land who had become outsiders in their own homes. Fourthly, the institution of the Supervisors, had itself become only parasitical and superfluous which only taxed the resources of the Company instead of adding to them. Fifthly, the revenue assessment increased every year, there were defaulters, and the Deputy Diwans were blamed not only for intercepting the Company's revenues, but also for inefficiency.

It was in these circumstances that the Directors decided to abolish the Dual Government of Clive and stand forth as Diwans. Hastings was sent out with wide powers to introduce changes and remodel the whole system.

The Reforms of 1772

Hastings appointed a Committee of Circuit consisting of the Governor himself and some senior servants of the Company, which toured the districts and submitted its report. On the basis of this report, and under the instructions of the Directors several changes were introduced in the Land Revenue System of the provinces in 1772.

At the top, the Directors having decided themselves to stand forth as Diwan, the posts of the two Deputy Diwans were abolished. In the districts, the Supervisors themselves were made Collectors. They were to be assisted by an Indian Diwan each, and revenue collection and civil justice being closely interconnected, in each district a Diwani Adalat or civil court was set up to be presided over by a Collector who was to collect revenues, prepare exact rent-rolls after collecting necessary information and administer civil justice. Regulations were made to prevent the collectors from abusing their powers, and none of them was to stay at one station for more than two years.

Between the Collectors and the Central Government, the Controlling Councils of Revenue at Murshidabad and Patna, and the Controlling Committee of Revenue at Calcutta were abolished, and the revenue administration was centralised, being placed in the hands of the Governor and Council who for this purpose were to be called the Board of Revenue. The Board would be assisted by Roy Rayan, an Indian officer, who was to be a medium of communication between it and the Diwans in the districts, and who also was to superintend the Khalsa.

The Khalsa, or treasury, was shifted from Murshidabad to Calcutta, and its whole structure was changed so as to fit the new conditions.

The yearly settlement was dispensed with, and it was decided now to make settlement for five years with the highest bidders at a public auction, though other things being equal, the zamindars were to be given a preference.

For the protection of the ryots against the zamindars or farmers, as the case may be, they were to be granted Pattas, and the Collectors were asked specially to look after their interests.

The first set of changes introduced by Hastings in 1772, suffered from several defects. The "settlement was for five years, and the lands were farmed out by public auction in order to discover the real value of the lands. This in itself, is a comment on the board's revenue policy, for they must have known that to farm the land revenue by public auction should induce many people to bid from motives other than mere desire for profit, the gambling instinct, the desire for power, the opportunity of inflicting injury on an enemy or of humiliating a local Zamindar, all powerfully contributed to raise the bidding beyond the value of the revenue."

In many cases, therefore, from the zamindars the land passed into the hands of mere speculators who had neither an interest in nor the knowledge of agriculture which was bound to suffer.

The plight of the ryots continued to be pitiable, rather it became worse where a speculator replaced a genuine zamindar and transferred all the burden of his high biddings on to them. The Collectors, with all the instructions to them, remained only silent or indifferent, or what is equally probable, completely ignorant of all this. The revenues of the Company failed to show an improvement, and Hastings had to think of some alternative plans for the purpose.

Reforms of 1774

The Collectors had been appointed to districts not for any improvement in the administrative machinery but for an improvement of the revenue resources of the Company which was always suspicious of the character of all the Indians from Deputy Diwans down to the ryots. But the Collectors instead of increasing revenues, only increased a new charge on them, and in April 1773 therefore the Directors ordered their recall and the development of some alternative scheme.

In November 1773, therefore, the Governor and his Council

adopted a new scheme which was to consist of two parts, the first of which was temporary and for an immediate application, and the second that was permanent for future enforcement. The Collectors were now to be recalled from the districts, and under the temporary scheme they were to be placed at an intermediate stage, while under the permanent scheme they would be recalled to the Centre.

The temporary part of the scheme was implemented in 1774 when the whole of Bengal presidency was divided into six divisions of Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, Burdwan, Dinajpur and Dacca ; each of them consisting of a number of districts.

Each division was to have a Provincial Council consisting of five senior servants of the Company, one of them appointed as Chief was to get a high salary of Rs 3,000 per mensem so that he did not indulge in private trade. Each Council was to have a Diwan to assist it ; and besides, would have a Secretary, a Persian translator, an Accountant and three assistants. The constitution of the Council for Calcutta division was slightly different. Of the five members of this Council, two were to be from the Governor's Council, and the Council was to be assisted by Roy Rayan who would work for it in the capacity of a Diwan.

The Provincial Councils were to correspond with the Governor and Council in their capacity as Board of Revenue, while the Provincial Diwans were to correspond with the Roy Rayan who would work under the instructions of the Board of Revenue.

From the districts the Collectors were recalled to the respective headquarters of their Provincial Councils whom they would help, and in their place Indian revenue officers known as Naibs were appointed to collect revenues and to preside over the Diwani Adalats. These Naibs were to correspond in their revenue capacity with the Provincial Councils through their Diwans.

For occasional inspections, the Board in the Centre was to appoint Commissioners, selected unanimously, and known for moderation of temper and possessing knowledge of Persian.

The changes introduced in 1774 were meant purely to be temporary in character, but shortly after their introduction new Government was established on 20 October 1774, as provided by the Regulating Act. Majority of the members of the Governor-General's Council being hostile to him right from the start, as already mentioned they decided to continue the system of 1774 till they got themselves educated and introduced further changes. Quinquennial settlement introduced in 1772 had not proved a success. It was to come to a close in 1777 and some alternative system of settlement also had to be evolved. The Council created a new post of the superintendent of the Khalsa records to which some of the duties of

Roy Rayan were transferred, and thereafter entered into a lengthy debate with regard to the method of settlement, and with regard generally to the internal and external policy of Hastings.

Discussions with regard to the method of assessment divided the Council into two parts, one consisting of Hastings and Barwell which was of the opinion that the displacement of the zamindars had proved harmful. They should be restored to their old positions and settlement should be made with them for one or two lives at the rate of average revenue collected during the last three years, the defalcation in payment to be made good by disposing of a part of the defaulters' lands of equivalent value.

The other school led by Francis also favoured a settlement with the zamindars, but to be made on permanent basis at a rate which would give the government only a moderate surplus after covering all charges.

No final decision could be reached with regard to the matter by 1777, and the Directors instructed that a yearly settlement should be made pending a permanent decision.

In the meanwhile Hastings had to face troubles from yet another quarter. The Supreme Court established by the Regulating Act had been given a jurisdiction over all servants of the Company employed direct or indirect, which it interpreted to mean that the district Naibs should also work under their instructions in their judicial capacity. It started hearing appeals from the Diwani Adalats the decisions of which were thus delayed and often quashed, with the result that the revenue collection machinery came almost to a standstill. It was not till 1779 when Hastings offered the Chief Justice Impey to accept also the post of Chief Judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalat with an additional salary of £ 6,500 per annum that peace in this connection was restored. The Bengal Judicature Act of 1881 also came to his rescue when revenue administration was placed outside the Court's jurisdiction.

Towards the end of 1880 Hastings was able to secure effective casting vote in his Council as well, when Francis sailed for England and the other adversaries had sickened or died. He now had a clear field before him. The changes of 1774 were only temporary in nature, the Directors in 1773 had ordered the Collectors to be recalled to the Centre, and the Amini Commission, 1776-78, recommended greater reliance to be placed in the Indians. In these circumstances Hastings enforced the permanent part of his scheme of 1774.

Changes Introduced in 1781

Under this scheme the Provincial Councils were abolished, and

the Collectors were recalled to the Centre ; the district administration remaining with the Indian Naibs, with the exception of the districts of Rangpur, Chitra and Bhagalpur where for strategical reasons English Collectors were appointed.

In the Centre a new Committee of Revenue was set up which consisted of top covenanted servants of the Company, John Shore, Charters Croftes and Anderson who were assisted by an Indian Diwan, Ganga Govind. Roy Rayan remained, but not to interfere with the Diwan, while the post of the Superintendent of Khalsa Records set up by the hostile majority was abolished, his functions being taken over by the Committee itself.

The members of the Committee were to take an oath at the time of their appointment against receiving illegal gratifications, and instead of a fixed salary, they were to get a commission of two per cent of the revenue collected as their remuneration, in which the President's share was larger.

This Committee was to remain in constant touch with the Governor-General and Council for instructions and supervision. All accounts from the districts were to be sent to this Committee which would deliver them to the Accountant General.

The settlement of 1881 had its own defects. The first was that it suffered from over centralisation. Under the reforms of 1772 Collectors had been appointed to the districts where, if they had continued, they should have collected some experience and knowledge which could be of help for the future administrative reforms. But as it is obvious, the Directors had stood forth as Diwans not to save the people of India from illegal exactions, but to help themselves get all that money which went into the hands of its own servants or the Indian revenue agency through illegal practices. The Collectors were appointed to serve this cause, but when instead of enhancing the Company's revenues they just proved another charge on them, they were withdrawn, and with everybody from ryots to the Diwan supposed to be concealing facts, the Company remained as ignorant of the actual Indian conditions as it ever was.

The Committee in the Centre was too much at the mercy of their Diwan through whose eyes they looked, and through whose ears they listened to whatever happened around them.

The ryots were the oppressed people. When the Company completely absolved itself of any duty towards them by withdrawing the Collectors and by keeping their concern confined only to receiving money, their lot was bound to deteriorate further.

In actual practice at the district level the revenue cases needed to be speedily disposed of for the sake of efficiency as well as for

making greater profits for the Company. But now everybody had to look to the Centre where the initial and the final decision both lay.

Customs and usages of the people varied from pargana to pargana, and the knowledge regarding them could not be acquired sitting far away in Calcutta. And without that knowledge the Company could neither rule nor fully profit.

In a general survey of the whole land revenue administration of Hastings, besides the defects pointed out above which pertained basically to the schemes of 1774 and 1781 one may add that the assessment of land revenue made in 1772 was excessive. When land was auctioned to the highest bidders it brought in speculators who only helped in increasing the misery of the ryots. In the Centre the Governor-General and the Council were a divided house where much that happened was based on personal grudges and not on any high principles of economics.

Yet we may conclude with the words that the period of Hastings in Bengal was a transitional period in which the Company was just groping its way. One experiment after another was made and a realisation progressively dawned on them that the policy of making hay while the sun shines did not ultimately pay.¹

1 Dhar, Nitnajan *The Administrative System of the East India Company in Bengal, 1714-1756* I, p. 181

Foreign Relations Under Hastings

EMPEROR SHAH ALAM

When Hastings took charge of the Government in Bengal, the finances of the Company were not in a good shape. The Company had to maintain a large standing army, regularly pay tribute to the Emperor and pension and other charges to the Oriental potentates. But the currency was in short supply.

Outside Bengal, the Marathas were fast recovering from the crushing blow they had received from Ahmed Shah Abdali at Panipat. In January 1771, they invaded the Doab and wrested Etawah from the Rohillas, and in February, the same year, they occupied Delhi and now decided upon further expanding their influence in the name of the defunct authority of Emperor Shah Alam who lived under the British protection. The Marathas asked the Mughal Emperor to come out and they would restore him to his ancestral glory in Delhi. In vain did the British implore him to reject this deceptive and dangerous proposal, for Shah Alam left Allahabad in May 1771 and went over to the Marathas. "It was to prove a momentous and calamitous decision, and the misguided emperor was never again to return to British territory. For thirty-two years he was practically a state prisoner in the hands of the Marathas or the Afghans."¹

Once the Marathas placed the Emperor under their own protection, they started to wrest from him one concession after another. In 1772 he was forced to appoint a minister of their own choice. The same year he was also obliged to surrender to them the districts of Kora and Allahabad which, however, "the deputy of the Emperor, declaring the act involuntary, had to save them for his master, placed under the protection of the English"...²

When Hastings took charge of the affairs, he had to face

1. Cambridge, *op. cit.*, V, p. 215.

2. Mill, James, *The History of British India*, London, 1840, III, p. 566.

a delicate problem. Would the British let the Marathas occupy the districts on which they had set their heart, keep these districts under their own protection for the sake of the Emperor, appropriate for the Company or return them to the Nawab-Wazir. Hastings had to choose one of these four courses. The Company's need to make money out of the situation helped Hastings to decide the issue. He ordered the payment of tribute to the Emperor to stop, because he had deserted the British and gone over to their enemies. The districts of Kora and Allahabad were taken away and transferred to the Nawab-Wazir, in return for which the latter paid twenty lakh rupees in cash and promised the payment of another thirty lakhs in two equal yearly instalments.

Was it the right course that commended itself to Hastings? Mill writes: 'Generosity.. pleaded with almost unexampled strength on behalf of the forlorn Emperor, the nominal sovereign of so vast an empire...who now possessed hardly a roof to cover him. Justice, too, or something not easily distinguished from justice, spoke on the same side...'¹

But Hastings had his own justification for what he did. The Emperor was no more a friend of the British. He had gone over to the Marathas, the enemies of the British and every rupee of tribute paid to the Emperor in such circumstances would go to strengthen those whom the British wanted to weaken. Secondly, he refused to agree that the British had betrayed the Emperor by retaining the Diwani rights over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa while they stopped paying him tribute. "Not one of his natural subjects offered any kind of submission to his authority, when we first fell down and worshipped it."² The Company, he said, "received nothing from him, but a presumptuous gift of what they had already acquired by their own power, the same power to which he was indebted for his crown, and even for his existence."³

Nor could the Emperor be considered as having more than a titular right over the districts taken away from him, a right as good as he had over the whole of the province of Oudh. Then, the Company needed money. The mortality of 1770 had denuded Bengal and Bihar of nearly one-half their population. Those who survived had become too weak to produce revenues. The Company in these circumstances could not squander its meagre funds on the allies who could be relied upon only for faithlessness and intrigues.

Again, of late, the Mughal Emperor had been getting over-ambitious, and considering it below his dignity to deal with the

1. Mill, *op. cit.*, III, p. 566.
2. Strachey, *Hastings and Rohila War*, p. 59.
3. Forrests, *Selections from the State Papers...*, I, quoted by Ram Prakash, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Company's officials in India, he had attempted at a direct communication with the British Crown through Major Morrison. He had to be cut to size.

Lastly, before the step was taken against the Emperor, he had been invited to send his representative to explain his case. But he never cared to do so.

One may also question the advisability of choosing to transfer the forfeited territories to the Nawab-Wazir instead of retaining them for the Company. But here also the step taken by Hastings did not lack some reasons. Firstly, if Hastings had retained the territories, it should have unnecessarily aroused the jealousy of the Nawab-Wazir whose friendship was the central pillar of his foreign policy. Secondly, the Directors also had not favoured the extension of the Company's dominions in India, and the annexation of these districts which lay at a distance from the Company's territories should have created unnecessary administrative problems.

Thirdly, the Emperor was in the hands of the Marathas. The latter had already once entered into an alliance with the Rohillas with whom the negotiations were once again afoot, with the rumours of an approach being made to the Nawab-Wazir as well. If such a confederacy materialised, the British should have been in trouble. The Marathas had set their heart on Kora and Allahabad, which if transferred to the Nawab, would sharpen the differences and arouse more jealousy between them, resulting in the Nawab's greater dependence on the British friendship and support.

Fourthly, the British at the time needed means to relieve the Company of its financial stringencies. The transfer of the territories to the Nawab helped them to get what they wanted.

Be that as it may, for a time after the Emperor was thus punished, there were rumours of his preparing for a revenge. He, the Marathas, the Rohillas and the Sikhs were reported to be coming together to plan an invasion of Oudh, with the result that the British felt the need of contracting an alliance with the military adventurers like Najaf Khan. The proposed alliance against the Nawab of Oudh however, could never materialise, and with the passage of time the Emperor reconciled himself to his losses.

About 1782 Hastings once again felt the need of developing contacts with the Emperor through a representative appointed to his Court. This was needed to keep the British posted with the developments in Delhi and to keep a watch on the activities of the foreign agents at that place. When Mirza Jawan Bakht, the eldest son of the Emperor, fled from Delhi, Shah Alam also felt the need of approaching Hastings who could persuade the prince to return to his father. Hastings obliged him, and Major James Brown was appointed as

the British representative in Delhi. The rupture was thus partially healed.

THE ROHILLA WAR

A very fertile land about 12,000 square miles in area, Rohilkhand lay at the base of the Himalayas along the north-west frontiers of Oudh. Its population consisted of about a million Hindus who were ruled by an Afghan tribe of free-booters named Rohillas who conquered the country early in the eighteenth century and who, according to one estimate, did not number more than 40,000. The total revenue of Rohilkhand was said to be between seventy and eighty lakhs of rupees per annum, and the Government consisted of a loose confederacy of different chiefs headed by Hafiz Rehmat Khan who once was the guardian, hence *Hafiz*, of the sons of Ali Mohammad, the real ruler, but who had usurped the throne for himself.

Early in 1772 the Marathas attacked Rohilkhand and started plundering its territories, the Rohilla chiefs having fled into the Terai forests. The Nawab Wazir of Oudh fearing lest his own country should be subjected to Maratha depredations, marched with some English battalions to his borders where negotiations opened between him and the Rohillas as to how to meet the menace.

It must here be remarked that there had already been some correspondence between the Nawab-Wazir and the British about the desirability of encouraging a clash between the Rohillas and the Marathas so that the Nawab may be able to take advantage of the resulting situation and annex the Rohilla country for himself which was necessary to give him a scientific and defensible frontier on the North-West. Nor was it completely impossible for the Marathas and the Rohillas to combine and march into the Oudh territories and plunder them. All were self-seeking opportunists who could be relied upon but only for treachery.

Be that as it may, on 17 June 1772, a treaty was signed between the Nawab-Wazir and Hafiz Rehmat Khan in the presence of Sir Robert Barker, the Commander of the British troops in Oudh who bore a witness to it that the Rohillas would pay to the Nawab an amount of forty lakh rupees whenever he would make Marathas retire from Rohilkhand, "either by peace or war." The agreement thus entered into could not be immediately made use of; for the Marathas vacated shortly before it materialised.

Early in 1773, however, the Marathas reappeared and entered Ramghat. The treaty was invoked, and the Nawab marched with the British troops to help the Rohillas. The Marathas, whose main army was still across the Ganges, refused to risk an encounter with the British and recrossed the river. But it was not before several months

of threatening postures on the other side of the Ganges that they ultimately withdrew.

During this time the Nawab-Wazir had suffered a considerable expense over his movements, and he now demanded the stipulated prize from the Rohillas. The Hafiz, however, refused to oblige him, for he argued that there had been no actual collision with the Marathas who had left on their own and that their army had not been destroyed and the very next year they might return. There seems some justification in what the Hafiz held, but the treaty specifically mentioned the words, the expulsion of the Marathas "either by peace or war," and not "war alone" and the Nawab-Wazir had incurred a sufficient expenditure and inconvenience to deserve the prize he demanded. The British persuasions, however, failed and the Hafiz persisted in his refusal.

In September, 1773, the Nawab met Hastings at Benaras and offered to pay the British an amount of forty lakh rupees in addition to meeting the actual expense of war, if they helped him to expel the Rohillas and annex their country. No final agreement on the matter was drawn out. Hastings seems to have shown his inclination to help. Later on some more correspondence passed between the two, and after some hesitations the final decision to march into Rohilkhand was taken.

The British troops headed by Colonel Champion, who had now replaced Barker, and supported by the Oudh army, marched into Rohilkhand on 17 April 1774. On 23 April a battle was fought at Miranpur Katra where, after a gallant resistance, the Rohillas suffered a crushing defeat, the Hafiz himself being killed in the battlefield.

As a result of the British victory the fertile country of Rohilkhand was annexed by Oudh which paid to them the amounts stipulated in the agreement. A small part of the Rohilla territories, together with Rampur, were however, given to Faizulla Khan, the son of Ali Mohammad, who entered into a separate treaty in October 1774. As many as about twenty thousand Rohillas were expelled from their country.

The Rohilla policy of Warren Hastings has been bitterly criticised, and although it was not made an article of impeachment in the British Parliament, he had to suffer the malice of personal enemies and the wild onslaughts of party orators and writers who passed sarcastic remarks to condemn his Rohilla expedition. "One pamphleteer of his day coolly affirmed that 500,000 Rohilla families were driven across the Jumna, and that Rohilkhand had become a barren and unpeopled waste."¹

1. Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

P.E. Roberts writes : "Hastings was obviously himself doubtful about the expediency of the whole transaction, and his Council still more so. He seems to have allowed himself to be drawn into the matter without having carefully thought it out...For a statesman to commit himself to a course of action while hoping¹ that the need for it may not arise, is not the happiest or the most efficient kind of political expedient."²

Rohillas were better administrators than the Nawab, and according to Strachey, "the mass of the Hindu population were treated with greater consideration and received better protection than was the case in any neighbouring provinces excepting those in the possession of Najib-ud-daula"³

Some argue that it was not more than twenty-five years since the Rohillas had established themselves in the country, and therefore they were as foreign as the Russians in Poland in the time of Napoleon. Their expulsion from the country amounted only to weeding out the herd that was not wanted in the country. But if this argument applied against the Rohillas, the question may be asked as to how old the British power itself was in Bengal, and in the light of this argument, what right the British had to interfere in the internal politics of Rohilkhand.

Colonel Champion himself criticised the Nawab whose men did not "cease to overspread the country with flames till three days after the fate of Hafiz Rehmat Khan was decided." The account of atrocities committed by the Nawab and his men may have been exaggerated by Champion because he was jealous of not having been given the control of political relations in the campaign which was left to Middleton and because he himself got no share in the booty, yet what he said may have some element of truth, and this seems to be confirmed by the British Resident at Rampur who later on looking at the deserted lands, lamented in 1781 saying that district was "what the whole of Rohilkhand was under the government of Rohillas, a garden without an uncultivated spot."

There was some justification in the argument of the Rohillas that the Marathas had not yet been destroyed, and if every year they just appeared on the Rohilla borders necessitating some action against them, every year the Rohillas would have to pay the stipulated amount of money to the Nawab which the Rohilkhand revenue were unable to bear.

Yet when all this is said against Hastings, it must be said that

1. According to Roberts, Hastings had made a secret agreement with the Nawab at Benaras to help him, but later on wanted to back out.
2. *Cambridge, op. cit.*, V, pp. 221-22.
3. Strachey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, p. 30.

much of what was said against him, betrayed only one-sided view of the whole episode and the extra sense of righteousness on the part of some English statesmen who failed to read the situation as it actually existed, and therefore failed to comprehend the necessity of the action that was taken by Hastings.

"Hastings had followed with anxious eyes the gradual resurrection of the Maratha power from the bloody field of Panipat; and his sojourn at Madras had given him a strong foretaste of the mischief which Maratha greed, cunning and ambition might work among the distracted communities of Northern India. If the countrymen of Shivaji once gained a permanent footing in Rohilkhand, Oudh itself would soon be at their mercy, and the English might have to fight a desperate struggle for Bengal. The innocence of the Rohilla chiefs had just displayed itself in negotiations with Sindhia and Holkar for objects dangerous to the peace of Oudh. Instead of paying their debt to Shuja they were planning a raid across the Ganges into the country about Cawnpur."

If the Rohillas had not directly provoked Hastings "their intrigues with the Marathas were a standing danger to Bengal and Oudh. It was better, he thought, to join in crushing them than to run the risk of being crushed himself."

The Nawab and Hastings did not aim at massacring the Rohillas, they wanted only to purge the country of hostile elements. Hastings himself remarked: "the extirpation consisted in nothing more than in removing from their offices the Rohillas who had the official management of the country, and from the country the soldiers who had opposed us in the conquest of it."² If the Nawab's men indulged into excesses and neither he nor Champion could control them, it is they who are to be condemned. Hastings' reply to Champion who suggested having a share in the exploits is indeed revealing. "The idea of the prize-money," he wrote, "suggests to my remembrance the former disorders which arose in our army from this source ... It is to be avoided. It is poison." And to Middleton the Resident in Oudh, Hastings wrote: "I desire that you will take an immediate occasion to remonstrate with him (the Nawab) against every act of cruelty or wanton violence."³

Whatever the justification for them, there is no doubt that the Rohillas violated the treaty which they had signed with the Nawab and to which Barker had been a witness. The Nawab, on the other hand, was a British ally the commitments with whom had to be

1. Trotter, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 73.

2. See Ram Prakash, *The Foreign Policy of Warren Hastings*, 1960 p. 26.

3. Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, quoted by Ram Prakash, *op. cit.*, p. 27; See also Feiling, Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19

honoured unless the British wanted to sacrifice every gain that they had made in Oudh.

Geographically and politically Rohilkhand was to Oudh exactly what Scotland was to England before Queen Elizabeth. Without its annexation no scientific and defensible frontiers could be given to Oudh the protection of which was the responsibility of the British. Passage for the invasion of Oudh and Bengal lay through Rohilkhand and the Rohillas were not the people on whom the Nawab or the British could ever rely.

And then Hastings needed money. He wrote to Sullivan: "Such was my idea of the Company's distress at home, added to my knowledge of their wants abroad, that I should have been glad of any occasion to employ their forces, which saves so much of their pay and expenses."¹

CHAIT SINGH OF BENARAS

Balwant Singh was the first Raja of Benaras whose father was an adventurer who had ousted his own patron from the zamindari he held from the Mughals. Balwant Singh became a vassal of the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh. The British got him confirmed in that position by the Treaty of Allahabad signed in 1765 for he had rendered help to them against their enemies at Buxar.

In 1775, Asaf-ud-Daula by the Treaty of Faizabad, transferred sovereignty of the zamindari of Benaras and its independence to the Company. Thereafter the hostile majority in the Governor-General's Council in Calcutta sent Francis Fowke to Chait Singh, the son of Balwant Singh, to notify to him the change, to deliver him the sanads of investiture and to ask him to acknowledge the British sovereignty on oath by paying a *nuziana* of ten thousand rupees. The Raja was to continue paying an annual tribute of Rs. 2,221,745 to the Company, as he owed to the Nawab Wazir, and was permitted to raise and maintain 2,000 horse, equipped and trained in the European fashion for the protection of his territories. So long as the Raja remained faithful to the terms of agreement, he was to be assured that the tribute payable by him would not be enhanced, but if he negotiated with the enemies of the Company, his lands would be forfeited. The views of Hastings that the Raja was capable of paying more, were brushed aside.

Towards the end of 1776 Hastings commanded majority in his Council once again. He recalled Fowke from Benaras and in his place appointed Thomas Graham as the British Resident. The latter was, however, again replaced by Fowke who was recalled for the

1. Stratchey, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

second time later and now Markham was appointed as Resident in Benaras in 1781.

About this time the Company fell into serious financial troubles as a result of the Maratha war and the hostilities that broke out with France in 1778. Hastings, supported by his Council, decided that an additional charge of 5 lakh rupees should be imposed upon Chait Singh which was well within his means to pay, for his zamindari was considered to be worth not less than fifty lakh rupees per annum. It was rather proposed that this sum should be realised from him every year till the hostilities lasted. In vain did Chait Singh protest that under the agreement of 1775 it had been specifically mentioned that no additional demands would be made on him so long as he remained faithful to the British.

The demand for the same amount was repeated in 1779. Chait Singh pleaded that his financial resources did not permit him to meet it, and that the special contribution imposed on him should be confined to that year alone. This infuriated Hastings and he ordered that the whole amount of five lakh rupees should be realised immediately, instead of being received by instalments. When the Raja meekly protested, two battalions were ordered to get ready to march against him and to realise not only the additional sum, but also the whole expense of the expedition against him. The Raja submitted once again.

The demand was repeated for the third time in 1780. The Raja sent a confidential agent to Hastings and attempted to bribe him with two lakh rupees hoping that he would rescind his demand for five lakhs. Hastings at first refused to accept the bribe, but being in need of money to fit out an expedition against Sindhia, he accepted it, but repeated the demand of five lakhs as well. The Raja had no alternative but to bow.

No sooner, however was the payment in 1780 realised, than a new demand was made on the Raja to supply 2,000 horse for the defence of Bihar as planned by Sir Eyre Coote on 26 September 1780. The Raja protested that under the agreement that was the total number of horse that he had been permitted to raise, but it was not obligatory on him to do that. He, therefore, could supply the demand only if he violated the agreement and raised a cavalry beyond the stipulated number. Hastings thereupon reduced the demand to one thousand cavalry. The Raja replied offering 500 foot and 500 horse instead. In May 1781 Hastings secured an authority from his Council personally to go and settle the affairs. He announced an immense fine of fifty lakh rupees on the Raja and marched to Benaras to realise it.

“The year 1781 had opened for Hastings over a troubled sea of danger, distress, and difficulty. Haider Ali was raging about the

Karnatic; Goddard and Camac were fighting the Marathas, and French fleets were cruising in the Bay of Bengal. When he had sent Camac to look after Sindhia, shipped off Coote's soldiers for Madras, started Pearse's brigade on its march southward, and completed his bargain with the Raja of Berar, the Governor-General found his treasury running very low indeed. Money had to be raised somehow, if British India was to be saved."¹

In July, Hastings marched towards Benaras. The Raja met him at Buxar on the way and abjectly humbled himself by placing his turban at his knees and begging his pardon. The latter, however, refused to give any answer till he reached Benaras. But reaching Benaras, instead of giving an interview to the Raja Hastings sent him a formal statement charging him of disobedience and demanding of him a full and categorical reply. He received a letter from the Raja which to an impartial judge would seem to err, if at all, in the direction of servility, but which Hastings described as "Not only unsatisfactory in substance but offensive in style." Markham was ordered to arrest the Raja who submitted in all humility and was imprisoned in his own palace outside which a Sepoy guard was placed. Chait Singh's men, however, could not tolerate this insult, his armed retainers from Ramnagar marched in and aided by a mob they fell on the guards who were instantly cut to pieces. This was a signal for general revolt, and "Chait Singh, fearing for the consequences, escaped in the turmoil and joined his rebellious army." Hastings immediately retired to Chunar for safety where he proudly rejected all offers for help from Oudh and turned down Chait Singh's requests to accept his submission.

In September, Popham opened a campaign and recaptured Benaras. Chait Singh fled to Gwalior, his whole territory was occupied and the rich booty found at Bijaigarh distributed among its captors. The Company, however, benefited from the campaign when a grandson of Chait Singh by a daughter was made new Raja, and the annual tribute was now raised to forty lakh rupees, almost double of what was previously received.

Hastings' action against the Raja of Benaras has been bitterly criticised. But his supporters aver that it did not entirely lack justification. First Chait Singh's zamindari was rich, and it did not produce a revenue of less than fifty lakh rupees per annum. As against this, he paid only twenty-two lakhs to the Company. Secondly, Chait Singh was a mere zamindar, and when the security of the State itself was threatened, he had no right to continue enjoying his prosperity. The State had gone to rack and ruin and the defence of the Raja himself required that he should help the British.

1. Trotter, *op cit*, p. 144

2. Cambridge, *op cit*, V p 296

Hastings defended himself perhaps correctly when he said : "I had no other view in it than that of relieving the necessities of the Company by an act which I considered to be strictly just."

Then, besides his annual revenues, Chait Singh was said to have inherited rich treasures from his father which lay in the fortresses of Lutteepur and Bijaigarh. It was merely his greed which prevented him from seeing sense in the Company's demands when it was in real distress.

Fourthly, the Raja was not, strictly speaking, loyal to the British as it was required by the agreement of 1775. On 8 March 1777, Thomas Graham reported that the Raja was repairing and stocking his forts. Similar reports were later on sent by Fowke, and Sir Eyre Coote estimated that he had raised as much as 33,000 troops. His Amils and tenants were habitually inhospitable towards the British, and there were rumours that things were maturing for a general uprising to overthrow the British rule. Trotter, the biographer of Hastings, avers that at the time Hastings retired to Chunar, the Raja had mustered an army of 40,000 strong within ten miles of that place, and that, earlier his bodyguard alone was larger than the force Hastings required of him.¹

If all that is said above is correct, there seems justification in the attempt of Hastings to 'teach the Raja a lesson' by ordering his arrest even after he had made his submission. It was magnanimity on his part to have reduced the demand from two thousand horse to only one thousand, and he could justifiably say, when he was offered only 500 horse and 500 foot, that "Chait Singh had received positive orders and those had been repeated. It was his duty to obey them, not to waste my time with letters of excuses."

But it seems, the supporters of Hastings have indulged as much into the exaggeration of Chait Singh's faults, as his opponents have made it a point to prove him a mere bully.

The agreement of 1775 had been made with Chait Singh against the wishes of Hastings. When the Raja's grant was renewed in 1776, Hastings wanted to declare the earlier agreement null and void, but the protests of the Raja made him change his mind, and Chait Singh continued to enjoy the assurance that the Company would not impose any charges in addition to the annual tribute that the Raja paid.

Nor would it be proper to term Chait Singh a mere zamindar, for he enjoyed the title of Raja, possessed an internal autonomy, and paid a tribute, not rent as the Company's contemporary records sometimes vaguely mention. But even if he was a mere zamindar, one

1. Trotter. *op. cit.*, pp. 145, 149.

may legitimately ask if similar demands were made on other zamindars of the Company as well as they were done in the case of Chait Singh !

Those who have tried to support Hastings by blaming the Raja of disloyalty, seem to be unjust to him by reporting that the Raja had raised 30,000 troops and that there were rumours of general uprising. The 40,000 that according to Trotter, the Raja mustered after Hastings retired to Chunar, if correct, must have included a large number of the excited mob who felt the humiliation the Raja suffered in his own capital. If the Raja truly had 30,000 trained troops earlier, not much dust should have been thrown on Hastings when he was later on impeached and condemned for penalising an innocent man.

Nor was the Raja completely wrong in pleading lack of means to satisfy the Company's demands. If Benaras produced an annual revenue of fifty lakh rupees, the tribute to the British Company was not the only charge on which the whole amount could be spent. There were other charges, both personal for the Raja and general for the administration. And for this the British had an ample proof when they saw before their eyes the people deserting their lands to escape heavy exactions after Hastings raised the tribute to forty lakh rupees.

Yet, we should not forget the distressing financial position of the Company which compelled Hastings to seek relief in the misfortune of the Raja. In 1777 Chait Singh had sent an emissary to congratulate Clavering on his reported accession to the post of Governor-General, and to P. E. Roberts there "seems no doubt" as Sir Alfred Lyall points out and as Hastings' own language shows, "that the Governor-General had never quite forgiven Chait Singh" for this. Or in other words, according to this writer, Hastings was inspired by malice and a desire for revenge, in his policy against the Raja. It is not, however, necessary that we also should agree with this view.

THE BEGAMS OF OUDH

Although the annual tribute payable by the Raja of Benaras was enhanced, yet immediately Hastings gained nothing from his expedition against Chait Singh. His attention now turned towards the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh who was sinking deep into the Company's debt on account of the British garrison that he had to maintain. This debt at the time stood at about a million and half sterling. On 17 September 1781 the Nawab-Wazir, Asaf-ud-Daula, met him at Chunar and told him that the only way he could clear his debt was that the Company should withdraw itself from the guarantee that it

1. *Cambridge, op. cit* , V, p 298.

had given to some of his jagirdars, so that he could resume their jagirs.

The Wazir's hint was towards the two Begams : one Bara Begam the mother of Shuja-ud-Daula and the grandmother of the present Nawab, and the other, the Bahu Begam, or the widow of the former Nawab and mother of the present one. These Begams who had inherited a wealth of about two million sterling from the late Nawab, now lived in Faizabad, kept their own armed forces, administered their large landed estates and claimed independence of the Nawab and put a slight on him. Asaf-ud-Daulah always looked with jealous eyes on his paternal treasure in the Begams' possession, which legally belonged to him ; but his mother, the Bahu Begam, being a lady of violent temper and a strong mind he had been afraid of forwarding his claims direct. Already in 1775 his mother had paid him an amount of three lakh sterlings which was in addition to about two and a half lakhs that the Nawab had received earlier. The second time when she made the payment, the Company guaranteed that no such demands on her would be repeated in the future.

When at Chunar the Nawab gave his proposal, Hastings showed a ready sympathy for his suggestion because of his knowledge that the Begams had actively helped Chait Singh in his revolt. The country around Faizabad was said to be openly hostile to the British, and as Hastings defended himself later on during his impeachment : "My Lord, at the time of my giving this consent I was, from the intelligence I had received, fully convinced of the Begams' disaffection to our Government." A few days before the matter was discussed with the Nawab, Hastings had received a report from Colonel Hannay : "this town Fyzabad has more the appearance of belonging to Chait Singh than the Vizir." And, "the people who are daily sent to him (Chait Singh), horse and foot, from Fyzabad and the seat of rebellion I have before named is very great."¹

Thus, a new treaty was signed with the Nawab at Chunar in 1781, under which the Company permitted him to resume such jagirs as he wished to do, provided that such jagirdars as were under the Company's guarantee, would be paid a due compensation.

Later on, however, when the Nawab returned to Lucknow, he found himself unable to gather sufficient courage to take the necessary step against the Begams. Besides, he was also afraid lest the British should be encouraged to interfere in his domestic affairs. But Hastings, once he had eyed the source which could give him financial relief, would brook no such shuffling from a weak-kneed man. He threatened to withdraw the British troops and Resident from Oudh, and ordered Middleton, the Resident to pin the Nawab to his

1. *Secret Select Committee Proceedings, 28th July, 1783, III, p. 1004, quoted by Ram Parkash, op. cit., p. 56.*

promises. The Nawab ultimately took courage, and despite the threats of his mother that she would lay waste the country, and that "should the country be lost to me, it shall be lost to all," he marched to Faizabad with the Resident and resumed the jagirs. The troops of the Begams offered no resistance, and they were quietly disarmed. The eunuchs were imprisoned, for a time they were deprived of food and perhaps flogging was also resorted to, till they came out with the secrets of the hoarded money. The Resident was thus able to collect enough to liquidate the whole debt of the Nawab to the Company and he returned.

Hastings assented to the resumption of the Begams' jagir and even used a degree of compulsion on the Nawab to do this. The Nawab gave a gift of ten lakh rupees to stop Hastings from pressurising him in this connection. The latter accepted the gift, a gift of "wretchedness to the oppressors," as Burke called it, yet he insisted on the action against the Begams being taken. The Court of Directors ordered Hastings to appoint an enquiry into the charge of the Begams preparing for rebellion. But he never obeyed these orders. These were the charges forwarded against Hastings when he returned to England and was impeached by the Commons.

The defence of Hastings was that the treaty of Chunar authorised the Nawab to resume jagirs generally and not those of the Begams' in particular. Thus many jagirs were in this manner resumed, and no discrimination was used against the Begams. Secondly, the reports of violence against the Begams were exaggerated. And even if tortures were inflicted on the eunuchs, for them it was the Nawab who was responsible. For the latter still was a sovereign ruler of his State into whose affairs he had no business to meddle.

Thirdly, if the Company's guarantee from some jagirdars was withdrawn, he was careful to see that proper compensations were given to those who thus suffered. Thus the Begams were also given a monthly pension in proportion to the revenues they received from their estates.

Fourthly, under the Muslim law, a widow can claim only one-eighth of her husband's inheritance after all his debts are cleared. But in this case no proper distinction could be made between the State property and the private property of the late Nawab who had left no will and who died in debt to the British.

Then, Hastings needed money for the defence of the country. Much needed reforms in the administration of the Nawab were also held up due to the lack of it. When the State itself suffered under heavy financial strains, the individuals could not be permitted to revel in prosperity.

"Had Hastings been half as greedy and scrupulous as his

enemies loved to paint him," writes Trotter, his biographer, "he might have returned home 'rich beyond the dreams of avarice,' rich enough to determine the vote of the House of Commons on any question affecting himself." When he received the gift of ten lakh rupees from Asaf-ud-Daula, he assured the Directors that the whole amount would be spent in their service, unless they themselves allowed him to pocket it. The Directors took no notice of his suggestion, and Hastings "accounted for every rupee of the money" when later on this was made one of the charges of impeachment.¹

Lastly, the Begams were insolent, they kept forces and defied the Nawab. They helped Chait Singh against the British and prepared for rebellion themselves. The order of the Directors for an enquiry into the charge of rebellion against them was not carried out because, as Hastings said, "it would have been an act of insanity in us to have obeyed it in August 1783, when a perfect reconciliation had taken place between the Nawab and his mother."

Although ultimately acquitted by the Lords, History may not accept all his defence and absolve Hastings completely of the charges levelled against him. The Begams had already twice paid to the Nawab before their jagirs were confiscated by him. When in 1775 they paid for the second time, the guarantee the British gave them against such exactions in the future was not similar to that they had given to the other jagirdars. The Begams' was a special case. They could not be treated like other jagirdars.

Nor by simply terming the Nawab a 'sovereign ruler' could Hastings change the fact that he was simply a puppet, and it was only constant pressure and threats which made him proceed against his mother. We are inclined to agree with Sheridan that the dagger which the Nawab pointed against the bosom of his mother, was in fact forced into his hands by none else but Hastings.

The compensation given to the Begams was only against their monthly income, not against the rich treasures and above all the independent position that they lost. The Nawab's misfortune was due to his inability to exist without the British help. Otherwise there was no need of falling into debts on account of the British garrison that he maintained. The real solution of his problems lay not in confiscating jagirs, but in doing away with the British military support.

Trotter's defence of the hero of his book in connection with the gift of ten lakh rupees that he received from the Nawab, seems only artificial and unconvincing. Hastings reported the matter to the Directors not immediately, but after a considerable delay when probably it became difficult to keep it from them. Then his request to

1. Trotter, *op. cit.* (Indian Reprint), p. 154.

be allowed to pocket the money was not something which could have emanated from a man of dignity.

Nor is it possible definitely to say that the Begams were really capable of a rebellion, though the treatment meted out to Chait Singh could have prompted anybody in their position to take precautions in time lest he should be the next victim. The evidence of rebellion was based on the affidavits taken by Sir Elijah Impey, on the statements of Colonel Hannay, Wheler and others. P.E. Roberts considers none of them quite reliable. In all the correspondence that passed between Hastings and Wheler at the time, there is no mention at all of any rebellion...It seems probable that the charge of rebellion was *ex post facto*, made when it was found necessary to present a justification for the whole business."¹

Yet, after all these arguments are forwarded against Hastings, nobody would suggest that he should have withdrawn his protecting hand from Oudh, or that the Company should have renounced all the fruits of the battles of Plassey and Buxar which were won less by their own ability than due to the circumstances which brought about the defeat of their enemies without their being defeated. Somebody had to fight against the indisciplined Maratha soldiers of fortune, to count only one evil from which this country at the time suffered. And all this required money. Credit of Hastings lies in the fact that even when he was being impeached for his ill-treatment of the Begams, he received 'strong letters of friendship and commiseration' from the Bahu Begam who was yet 'alive and hearty, and very rich.'

ODUH

We have already seen how Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh had been humbled in the battle of Buxar, and how after some efforts to retrieve his fortunes he submitted himself before the British and was restored to his former position in Oudh, with some modifications, by Lord Clive in the Treaty of Allahabad signed in 1765.

Clive was a seasoned statesman who knew that the annexation of Oudh which at the time seemed easy, would simply stir up a hornet's nest. The greatest menace to the budding British power in India were the Marathas a direct clash with whom had to be postponed for as long as possible. As the annexation of Oudh was bound to bring the British into a straight confrontation with them, it was better to keep it as a buffer State till the British were in a better position to grapple with that menace direct.

1. *Cambridge, op. cit.*, V, pp. 301-302.

But it seems Shuja-ud-Daula still had not learnt a proper lesson from his experiences, and no sooner was he restored to his former, but diminished authority, than he started his intrigues in order to snap himself free from the British influence. He started raising fresh troops and disciplined them in the European fashion. But the watchful eye of the British did not permit him to go too far, and before a mischief could take place they clamped down on him and he was pinned to a fresh treaty signed on 29 November 1768 under which the maximum number of his troops was fixed at 35,000.

It is in these circumstances that Hastings took charge of the affairs in Calcutta. He was of the opinion that the best defence of the British territories in India lay in creating around them a ring fence of the Indian States, subservient to the British, but strong enough with their help to resist a foreign aggression. The existing North-West frontiers of Oudh were not quite scientific. The Rohillas who occupied territories on that side of the State were incapable of resisting the Marathas from across the Ganges, the only passage through which they could enter Rohilkhand, and marching south-eastward threaten Oudh and then also the British. The best British defence therefore lay in the annexation of Rohilkhand to Oudh whereafter, as Hastings later on remarked, Shuja-ud-Daula would obtain "a complete compact state shut in effectually from foreign invasions by the Ganges, all the way from the frontier of Bihar to the mountains of Tibet, while he would remain equally accessible to our forces... either for hostilities or protection. It would give him wealth, of which we should partake, and give him security without any dangerous increase of power. It would undoubtedly, by bringing his frontier nearer to the Marathas, to whom singly he would be no match, render him more dependent on us and cement the union more firmly between us."¹

Hastings, as we have already seen, was quite amenable to the suggestion of the Nawab-Wazir that the latter should encourage hostilities between the Rohillas and the Marathas in order to weaken the former so that he should be able to take advantage of the resulting situation. In 1772 the Marathas attacked Rohilkhand and on 17 June the same year, the Nawab-Wazir entered into an agreement with Hafiz Rehmat Khan the Rohilla chief to which Sir Robert Barker, Commander of the British troops in Oudh, bore witness. Under this agreement, as we have already seen, the Rohilla chief agreed to pay an amount of forty lakh rupees whenever the Nawab-Wazir would help him and make the Marathas vacate their aggression in Rohilkhand, "either by peace or war". But early in 1773 when the Marathas once again invaded the Rohilla territories, but recrossed the Ganges as the Nawab-Wazir supported by the British troops appeared before them, the Rohilla chief refused to make the

1. *Select Committee Proceedings*, I, p. 80.

stipulated payment to the Nawab on the plea that actually there had been no collision with the Marathas.

In the meanwhile Hastings decided to have a meeting with the Nawab Wazir, for he felt that the British relations with him at the time were not clearly defined ; secondly, to discuss with him the question of payment for the British troops stationed in Oudh, whose every movement for the help of Nawab involved an expenditure which he was not very much willing to defray ; and thirdly, to discuss with him the disposal of Kora and Allahabad which had been taken away from the Mughal Emperor. On 24 June 1773, therefore, Hastings left for Benaras. But just before he left Calcutta, he received a letter from the Nawab-Wazir as to how the Rohillas had proved treacherous.

At Benaras lengthy discussion followed with the Nawab-Wazir, which ultimately resulted into a fresh treaty signed on 7 September 1773. Under this treaty (i) the Nawab agreed to receive a British representative who would reside close to his person ; (2) in future he would pay for the British troops that he used, at the rate of Rs 210,000 per mensem, per brigade ; and (3) Kora and Allahabad were transferred to him in return for a payment of fifty lakh rupees, twenty lakhs of which were to be paid immediately, while the remaining would be realised from him in two equal yearly instalments.

By a separate agreement, Chait Singh, the son of Balwant Singh, was confirmed on the zamindari of Benaras. "At the same time a secret agreement was made", writes P.E. Roberts, "by which the British were to furnish a brigade, to help the Nawab to punish the Rohillas for their evasion, and conquer the country for him. In return the Nawab was to bear all the expenses of the campaign and pay a sum of forty lakhs. Almost as soon, however, as the treaty had been concluded, the Nawab began to doubt whether he could bear the pecuniary burden involved, and since Hastings had some heart-searchings as to its expediency, they mutually agreed to postpone the expedition."¹

Hastings returned to Calcutta hoping that the secret agreement with regard to the Rohillas would never be invoked. But it was not long after he arrived in Calcutta that he received a request from the Nawab for help on the agreed terms. Hastings wrote back trying to dissuade him from the action, and the Nawab actually relented, but soon he changed and insisted on action being taken against the Rohillas. Hastings placed the whole matter before the Council which ultimately gave its approval, and on 17 April 1774 the British Brigade commanded by Colonel Champion marched into Rohilkhand which ultimately led to the annexation of that territory to Oudh.²

1. *Cambridge, op. cit* , V, pp. 218-19.

2. See for details *Supra*.

The attitude of Hastings in his secret agreement with regard to the Rohillas, and then his efforts to back out, betray his weakness as a statesman. To give promises on the hope that the time for their fulfilment would never come, is more an act of impulsive characters than that of seasoned thinkers.

Be that as it may, the whole situation soon changed. The Regulating Act of 1773 converted the Governor of Bengal into the Governor-General of Bengal who would be assisted by a Council of four in which all matters would be decided only by a majority vote ; the Governor-General being given no overriding power. The new Council consisted of Clavering, Francis and Monson all of whom seemed to have come from England only with a pre-determined attitude to oppose Hastings in whatever he did. Only one member, Richard Barwell supported him, with the result that the rule of Hastings now became in fact the rule of the hostile majority whose policy, whether he agreed with it or not, he had to execute.

As soon as this happened, the first thing the hostile majority did was to condemn the Rohilla policy of the Governor-General. Middleton, the British Resident in Oudh was forthwith withdrawn, and against the wishes of Hastings, on 28 December 1774 Bristow was appointed to blast his existing policy of strengthening Oudh as a buffer State. Bristow was to demand the immediate payment of forty lakh rupees (on account of the British help against the Rohillas) by the Nawab, failing which the Company's troops were to be withdrawn from Oudh, never to be sent back again. Otherwise also it was thought that the British troops should be withdrawn and sent to Oudh only when needed.

Hastings was helpless and began to see before him the prospects of his ring-fence policy fading into an unfulfilled dream. Early in 1775, Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh died, and with him was removed one more man who had seen the short-lived days of a growing independent sovereignty before all was steadily enveloped by the British. Before his death, Shuja commended his son Mirza Amani, who later on succeeded him under the title of Asaf-ud-Daula, to Hastings saying : "If my days are near to a conclusion, God's will be done. I depend on your friendship that after my decease, considering my dear son Asaf-ud-Daula in my place, you will afford him your assistance and on every occasion act for his benefit and advantage."

But, perhaps, only because this dying request came from the Nawab through Hastings, the hostile majority showed complete indifference, and on the succession of Asaf-ud-Daula he was informed that the Company's agreements with his late father were only personal, and his territories would be protected only till the Directors' pleasure in this connection was known. It was not before 22 May

1775 when a communication from the Directors upholding the policy of Hastings was received, that Bristow was permitted to sign a fresh treaty with the Nawab under which (1) the protection of the Nawab's territories was once again guaranteed, (2) the rate at which he was to pay the expense was enhanced from Rs 210,000 per brigade per month to Rs 260,000 and (3) the sovereign rights over the territories of the Raja of Benaras were transferred from him to the Company.

When Asaf-ud-Daula became the Nawab, he soon discovered that everything he saw before him was not satisfactory. His army was mutinous, and on 17 April 1775 he had to fight a pitched battle with his disaffected troops. His treasury was empty, major part of his country lay under zamindars who instead of helping the new Nawab showed every sign of rebellion, and his widowed mother who had inherited a huge wealth, showed no inclination to part with her riches to get him out of the wood. Above all was the unsympathetic attitude of the hostile majority in Calcutta of the continued support of which he could not be sure till a new treaty was given to him to sign on 22 May.

Soon, however, the whole situation changed. Monson, one of the hostile members, died towards the close of 1776. Hastings secured an effective casting vote and the hostile majority was reduced to minority. As soon as Hastings collected powers once again, he recalled Bristow and reappointed Middleton as the British Resident in Oudh. In order to strengthen the authority of the Nawab in his State, the Resident was to help him reorganise his finances so as to help in reforming the administrative set up of the country, as also to clear the arrears of the payments due to the Company. Middleton was also to report on the activities of the neighbouring powers and help establishing Oudh as a strong buffer State between the British and the other Indian princes across the Ganges.

Soon Middleton reported for duty and the threads of the old policy of Hastings in Oudh were picked up again. The process of steadily strengthening the British hold over that country started once again, and the Nawab was now persuaded to assign some land revenue to the Company equal to the expenses which he had to pay for the British brigades in Oudh. Later on yet another change was made. The land revenue which was assigned to the Company, was still collected by the Amils controlled by the Nawab's officials. To make the things easier for the British the Nawab now agreed to transfer also the duty of the collection of the assigned land revenue to Middleton, and placed three of his own battalions at his disposal through which the Amils were to be helped by the British in their duties. The territories the revenues of which were assigned to the Company were Rohilkhand, the Doab and the districts of Kora, Allahabad, Jagdispur and Shahrah. This was the forerunner of Wellesley's subsidiary system which later on helped the British to

establish an empire all over this country.

Besides, Middleton also started interfering in the internal affairs of the Nawab. Ministers of Hastings' own choice were appointed, and the changes in the administrative set up of the country began to be introduced according to the wishes of Middleton, so much so that the latter almost became the uncrowned king of the Nawab's dominions.

All this, however, instead of improving the financial conditions of the country, helped them only further to deteriorate, and towards the close of 1779 the Nawab requested Hastings to withdraw all his troops from Oudh with the exception of the permanent British brigades. For a time Hastings did not believe that the Nawab was really in financial difficulties. His troubles, he said, were rather due to the bad choice of ministers. But soon he was disabused of this misconception, and after his disillusionment with the Raja of Benaras when the Nawab met him at Chunar and proposed that besides withdrawing the British troops, the only solution of his financial problems lay in the British permitting him to resume the jagirs which were under the Company's guarantee, Hastings agreed, and on 19 September 1781 a fresh treaty was signed by the two which is known as the treaty of Chunar.

Under the treaty it was agreed (1) that all the British troops would be withdrawn from Oudh, with the exception of the permanent brigades.¹ (2) The Nawab would keep his private funds separate from the public funds and the latter funds would be controlled by a minister subject to the inspection of the British Resident. (3) The Nawab was authorised to resume the jagirs of his jagirdars, provided that those under the guarantees of the Company would be duly compensated with fixed monthly pensions. (4) He was also permitted to resume the lands of Faizulla Khan, the Rohilla chief with whom a separate treaty had been signed after the Rohilla war, but who was now said to have violated that treaty.

The provisions with regard to the resumption of jagirs, as it has already been discussed,² were aimed against the Begams of Oudh. But the permission to resume the lands of Faizulla Khan, needs some comments. Faizulla Khan, the son of Ali Mohammad and the real Rohilla ruler whose powers had been usurped by Hafiz Rehmat Khan, the reader may be reminded, had entered into a separate treaty with the Nawab after the Rohilla war, which was confirmed by the British. Under this treaty, in return for some territories left in his possession and the permission to retain not more than 5,000 troops, Faizulla was to send to the Nawab when at war "two or three thousand men according to his ability." Shortly after this treaty was

1. See Ahmad, Safi, *British Aggression in Oudh*, Meerut, 1969, pp 32-33.

2. See *supra*.

signed, Faizulla supplied 2,000 horse to the Company for which he was not bound by the treaty, and for which he received the thanks of the British. But the faithfulness of this chief could not save him from the unreasonable demands of Hastings, as it did not save Raja Chait Singh of Benaras.

In November 1780 when the security of the Company was threatened in India, Hastings made the Nawab require the Rohilla chief to supply 5,000 horse. Faizulla politely replied expressing his inability to supply this demand and offered to furnish two thousand horse and one thousand foot instead, as required by the treaty. Hastings reduced his demand to three thousand horse which again the Rohilla chief expressed his inability to supply. This was declared a breach of the treaty, and the Nawab was now permitted to resume his lands. The demands made on Faizulla were similar to those made on Chait Singh, and need no comment.

To come back to the main current of our discussions, after the treaty of Chunar the duties of the British Resident in Oudh became yet more exacting, but Middleton failed to perform them to the satisfaction of Hastings. The Nawab's debt to the Company still remained uncleared. Middleton could not duly report the rebellious conditions, as they developed in his dominions and the revenue administration under his supervision did not become a whit more efficient. In September 1782, therefore, Middleton was recalled and Bristow took charge of the office in Oudh once again.

Bristow went to Oudh charged with the duty of reforming the administrative machinery of the Nawab, by persuading him to establish central departments of revenue, justice, etc. to completely separate his private funds from the public accounts and to appoint only such ministers as were amenable to British supervision and guidance. He was to keep the Calcutta authorities regularly informed with regard to the distribution of forces in Oudh and with regard to the attitude of different Amirs towards the Nawab and towards the British.

Bristow came to Oudh fully convinced that the British had now become the real rulers of that State, while the Nawab was only a superfluous fifth wheel. Without consulting the Nawab, he disbanded 4,000 of his horse and 7,000 of his foot, himself took charge of the public accounts and even started interfering in the management of the private funds of the Nawab. He took up the appointment and dismissal of the State officers in his own hands, appointed a central appellate court of justice headed by an English officer and adopted a disrespectful attitude towards the Nawab himself.

Bristow's behaviour was reported by the Nawab to Hastings who put the report before his Council and himself expressed a dissatisfaction with the working of the Resident. It was decided that

Bristow should be recalled because he had also not been able to get the Nawab's debts to the Company cleared.

In the meanwhile, as the time for the retirement of Hastings from India drew near, the Nawab requested him to pay a visit at Lucknow. On 27 March Hastings reached that place, determined to make the Nawab himself responsible for his administrative reforms without interference by the British, provided the dues payable to the Company were forthwith cleared. He was received by the Nawab in a very cordial atmosphere, and a number of zamindars of Oudh made their contributions on the spot to clear the Nawab's debts to the Company. The Nawab and Hastings parted as friends.

One achievement of Hastings in Oudh was that all ambitions of the Nawab to establish his freedom from the British were completely and effectively negated, the Nawab became a dependable ally of the British, and a buffer who could effectively absorb all shocks of the invaders who intended to attack the British territories.

The First Anglo-Maratha War

CONDITIONS BEFORE HASTINGS

The Maratha power so ambitiously founded by Shivaji, went to rack and ruin soon after his death. One power rose from within another, till the whole Maratha dominion was parcelled out among the different warring chiefs who weakened themselves in mutual clashes and enabled the rising British power to swallow them all. The story of the Maratha decline is interesting.

By the time Hastings assumed charge as Governor-General in Bengal, the office of the Raja had become almost defunct, and the Chhatrapati, as he was known, was no better than a prisoner in the fort at Satara. All his powers had passed out into the hands of his Peshwa, or Prime Minister who himself came to occupy a hereditary office like a sovereign and there was an instance where a forty-day old infant became Peshwa to rule the destinies of the millions. But as if this was not sufficient, the curse of hereditary offices descended yet lower on the rungs of the political ladder, and now even the generals in the army started claiming the same privilege as the office of the Raja and the Peshwa enjoyed. The result was that besides other petty powers, four more chiefs emerged, each ultimately establishing an independent sovereign state of his own. These four were : Holkar, Sindia, Bhonsle and Gaikwar. There was a time when the Maratha sway extended upto Delhi, and for a time even the Punjab seemed to have passed under their control. But a severe blow at Panipat at the hands of Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1761 shattered their dreams.

For a while the Maratha fortunes seemed to be on the ascendancy once again when Madhav Rao I assumed charge as Peshwa and within a short time of the Panipat disaster put the Marathas once again on the career of a consolidated power. But he died on 18 November 1772 and G.S. Sardesai may not be wrong in his assessment that "the culminating point of Maratha ascendancy in India was not the reverse sustained at Panipat in 1761, as is

popularly supposed, but the death of their greatest Peshwa Madhav Rao in the year 1772.”¹

The British settlement of Bombay was not far off from Poona, the headquarters of the Peshwa's Government and the hub of all Maratha activities. In 1758 the Marathas signed an agreement with the British under which the latter secured ten villages as a free grant and some commercial advantages within the Maratha dominions. In 1759 a British mission under Price who was assisted by Thomas Motsyn came to Poona on a friendly visit, but with a secret purpose of trying to acquire from the Marathas in exchange for some other territories the places like Salsette and Bassein which had a strategic importance for the British and for which Bombay had received instructions from England. The mission failed, but the British did not lose their heart. The reverse the Marathas sustained at Panipat in 1761 may have made the British happy, but under Madhav Rao I when they once again started retrieving their fortunes, and planned a confederacy with Haidar Ali of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad which might threaten the British ally, the Nawab of Carnatic, Motsyn was sent to Poona in 1767 “for the purpose of ascertaining the Peshwa's views and of using every endeavour, by fomenting the domestic dissensions or otherwise to prevent the Marathas from joining Haidar Ali and Nizam Ali.”² Luckily the confederacy did not materialise due to the shortage of funds with the Peshwa, and Motsyn now busied himself once again in plans to secure Salsette and Bassein, the coastal territories on which the British had set their heart.

When a straight approach could not help Motsyn to get what he wanted, he started developing contacts with Raghunath Rao, popularly known as Raghoba, the uncle of Madhav Rao, who had once carried the Maratha arms into the Punjab and was now an aspirant for the office of Peshwa. And in this connection they secured a better chance when Madhav Rao died in 1772 and was succeeded against Raghoba's wishes by the former's younger brother Narain Rao.

The events now moved quickly and precipitated the first Anglo-Maratha War. On 13 August 1773, Narain Rao was murdered together with ten others. A palace conspiracy was the cause to which Raghoba was said to be a party. Raghoba became the new Peshwa and the British chances of success to get the territories on which they had set their heart seemed to have improved. The Chief Justice Ram Shastri's findings however, implicated Raghoba in the murder and when on 18 April 1774 a posthumous son was born to Ganga Bai, the widow of Narain Rao, whatever chances he still had were ruined. The Maratha chiefs declared the newly born prince as their Peshwa

1. Sardesai, *The Main Currents of Maratha History*, p. 132.
2. Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas*, p. 257.

under the name Madhav Rao II, and a council of 12 Barbhais (literally, elder brothers, i.e. senior persons) ordered the arrest of Raghoba. Just this time in December, 1774 the British attacked the fort of Thana which commanded the whole Salsette region and captured it. In the turmoil that resulted from this unprovoked British aggression which started the first Maratha War, Raghoba escaped and went over under the British protection, signing with them on 6 March 1775 what has passed into history under the name of the Treaty of Surat.

Treaty of Surat : Under this treaty (1) the British undertook to help Raghoba to get back into the office of the Peshwa, (2) in return they would get the territories of Salsette, Bassein and certain other places of naval importance, (3) Raghunath Rao would get a British contingent of 2,500 soldiers which would remain with him for his protection, and for which he would pay one and a half lakhs of rupees per annum as its expense. (4) In any peace that he signs with Poona he would include the British, and (5) pay them an amount of six-lakh rupees as security.

Thus were the Marathas betrayed by Raghunath Rao ; and the British designs of "fomenting the domestic dissensions" secured a success. The prince under their protection had to be carried back to Poona at the head of the British bayonets, and the war started.

CONDITIONS UNDER WARREN HASTINGS

In the meanwhile Hastings took charge as Governor-General in Bengal in October 1774 and the real powers of decision passed into the hands of the hostile majority in his Council which decided immediately to instruct the Bombay authorities to stop the hostilities. Two letters were addressed one after another, in which the Treaty of Surat was condemned because (1) it had been signed with Raghunath Rao when he had been disowned by his own people and was no more now the Peshwa, (2) it involved the Company into a war for the successful execution of which it had no resources, (3) it did not take into consideration the general interests of the Company's other settlements in India, (4) the British had received no injury from the Marathas which could entitle them to interfere into their internal affairs, and (5) it was contrary to the Act of Parliament recently passed. The hostile majority termed the treaty as invalid, and ordered the Bombay authorities to withdraw their forces immediately, unless this act endangered their own safety.

As these communications reached Bombay, they were already in the thick of war and did not think it advisable to withdraw. The personal conduct of Hastings himself was not clear, though he did not seem to agree with the position the hostile majority had taken up. In these circumstances the expedition led by Bombay against the Marathas proved disastrous, and though they still retained Salsette,

the complete humiliation of the Bombay authorities if they were left alone was writ large on the wall. The hostile majority blamed Hastings for this development and deputed Colonel Upton to go direct to Poona and negotiate peace with the Marathas.

The Poona authorities received Upton with due cordiality and ordered all hostilities to stop. Negotiations were started, but soon differences arose. (1) Upton refused to hand over Raghoba and wanted to have Salsette and Bassein for the British. He wanted the peace to be signed by all Maratha chiefs on behalf of Poona which the Poona authorities considered impracticable, for it would give an unnecessary importance to the subordinate officers. (3) Poona wanted the peace to be signed for British on their behalf as a nation, while Upton considered the Bombay authorities as the party on whose behalf alone it was necessary for the treaty to be signed. The negotiations failed and the Marathas immediately ordered an offensive to be mounted. Hastings also had to order the resumption of war.

This time, however, the fortunes did not favour the Marathas. While at Poona, Upton had reported that contrary to his understanding of dissensions at Poona, "at present I cannot see a single person that is not entirely devoted to them." But this was soon belied. As the war activities were resumed, a pretender named Sadashiv Rao Bhau suddenly appeared and raised a standard of revolt. This man had been confined since 1775, but he bribed his guards at the Ratnagiri fort from where he escaped and stunned the Poona authorities who had been preparing to teach the British a lesson. Consequently the Marathas had to sue for peace; for the revolt was formidable, and Poona could not carry on its fight on the two fronts.

Treaty of Purandhar. On 1 March 1776, thus a new treaty of Purandhar, was signed in which the misfortune of the Marathas was writ large. (1) They had to pay the British an amount of 12 lakh rupees which the latter had incurred on Raghoba. (2) the treaty of Surat was annulled, but Raghoba was not handed over to Poona which had rather to pay him an annual pension of Rs 315,000. Raghoba was to settle down at Kopargaon in Gujarat, and disband his army. (3) The territories the British had already acquired, like Salsette were to remain with them.

The peace of Purandhar, however, was only a patchwork which could not last long. (1) Upton had signed the treaty on behalf of the British, but its terms were to the liking neither of Bombay nor of Hastings himself who, though ratifying the treaty, continued encouraging Bombay in their attitude of bellicosity. Raghoba never settled down as stipulated in the treaty. Poona protested against the continued protection of the Bombay authorities to him, but it proved of no avail. (2) The pretender Bhau was in the meanwhile captured and put to death, thus leaving Poona free once again to deal with the British. (3) About this time St. Lubin, supposed to be a French

adventurer, visited the Poona court with a letter and presents from the French Emperor. The Marathas received him with all pomp and show, as against Motsyn who arrived to relieve Upton but received a reception only according to protocol. Lubin's prolonged stay at Poona for about a year, and the persistent rumours of the Marathas' defence treaty with the French which was said to be in the making, must have embittered the British yet further. For an information reached that the Marathas had "not only required the aid of France but also stipulated that the French should, as soon as possible move against the English, for which service... (they) agreed to give twenty lakhs of rupees and ten ships with sepoys; and to pay a further sum of twenty lakhs, upon their attacking Bombay."¹

(4) Another cause appeared which encouraged the British to resume hostilities with confidence. Sukaram Bapu, the aged premier of the Peshwa, fell out with his younger colleague Nana Phadnis who enjoyed a greater support among the Maratha Chiefs. The Bapu who had been instrumental in signing the treaty of Purandhar, now himself proved another traitor to the Maratha cause, and secretly contacted the Bombay Government offering his help for Raghoba if they took up his cause once again.

The Bombay authorities got anxious to take this chance, for they believed that the principal Maratha signatory to the Purandhar treaty having approached them, their resumption of hostilities could not be considered as the violation of that treaty. The hostile member opposed the views of the Bombay Government, but Hastings supported them, for the British had suffered defeats in America for which he wanted to compensate them in India and win laurels for himself. Sardesai writes, he "not only now gave up all his former friendly views towards the Poona ministers, but went to the other extreme of declaring an open war on them, even setting aside the instructions he had received from the Home authorities not to undertake fresh operations in favour of Raghunath Rao."²

In vain did the Poona Government write to Hastings that the rumours of their alliance with the French were unfounded, that Lubin had left and that the British would have to bear the consequences if they resumed hostilities against the treaty of Purandhar. Hastings authorised Bombay in March, 1778 to declare war and carry their nominee Raghoba to the office of the Peshwa.

As the hostilities started once again, Hastings tried to detach Bhonsle and Sindhia from Nana Phadnavis who now was the man who ran the Poona Government. But before he could secure any measure of success, the British received a crushing defeat at Talegaon on 19 January 1779 which resulted into the treaty of Wadgaon under

1. See Deodhar, Y.N., *Nana Phadnis*, Bombay, 1962, p. 64.

2. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, p. 69.

which (1) the British agreed unconditionally to surrender Raghoba to the Marathas, (2) they were to return Thana and Salsette, (3) order the Bengal forces to march back and (4) give two hostages till the terms of the treaty were fully observed.

After Wadgaon

The aspirations of Hastings to recover in India what the British had lost in America thus seemed to be completely shattered. The whole British nation was stunned and Hastings was blamed of having inflicted one more humiliation on them by moving against the wishes of the Home authorities when the English fortunes in America already ran low. Hastings, however, lost no time in repudiating the treaty and ordered General Goddard to retrieve the situation. Raghoba also escaped his captivity and joined this General at Surat.

When Nana learnt of the fresh British moves, he organised a quadruple alliance with the Bhonsle of Nagpur, the Nizam of Hyderabad and Haidar Ali of Mysore. "According to Nana's plan the Bhonsle of Nagpur was to open hostilities against the English in Bengal ; Haidar Ali was to attack Madras ; the Peshwa's army was to start the opposition in Gujarat and Konkan while the Nizam was to menace the English on the East Coast."¹ The diplomacy of Hastings, however, soon detached the Nizam and Bhonsle from their common cause and Nana had to be content with what remained behind.

As Goddard marched for revenge, in order to create a diversion in Central India, Hastings despatched Captain Popham who carried Gwalior by a brilliant night escalade on 3 August 1780. "The fort had always been looked upon throughout India as impregnable, and its capture raised the prestige of the English enormously." Sindhia who hastened northwards on the fall of Gwalior was defeated on 16 February 1781 at Sipri, and on 13 October the same year he signed a treaty with the British. The "really important clause in the agreement was that by which Mahadji undertook to effect a treaty between the ministers and the English and so stand guarantee for its observance."²

In the meanwhile as the main Maratha army was engaged with Goddard, in Gujarat, Nana persuaded Haidar Ali to pour his armies down the passes of Carnatic where they laid waste the coastal plains of Madras. One defeat after another was inflicted on the British till they got demoralised and began to contact Nana for peace. Hastings wrote to Anderson a British agent deputed to negotiate treaty : "It is not peace with conditions of advantage that we want

1. See Deodhar, *op. cit.*, pp.82-83.

2. *Cambridge History of India*, V. pp, 268-70, quoting Aitchison, *Treaties*, IV p. 33, Conflicting views have been given with regard to the matter for which one may examine with benefit Deodhar, *op. cit.*, pp. 808-110.

but a speedy peace, and we would rather purchase it with the sacrifice of every foot of ground excepting Salsette and the little islands adjacent to Bombay. Get Bassein, if you can ; but if this is likely to prove an obstacle in the conclusion of the treaty give it up." Again a letter to Nana dated 11 September 1781 said : "Orders have arrived not only from the Company but from the King of Great Britain...These orders are that their servants in India should not aim at new conquests, but live in peace and amity with all the powers in India...The orders are to settle immediately a peace and treaty of friendship with your government, which will be ratified by the King and Parliament and which cannot be altered by any servants of the Company in India."¹

Among the causes that compelled the British to sue for peace, one was the fact that their prolonged hostilities had completely exhausted their resources; two, Bengal was in the grip of a severe famine ; three, the arrival of a French fleet on the East Coast was apprehended ; four, the Nana-Haidar alliance had proved strong beyond their expectations ; and five, the recent reverses in America had chilled their early spirit of adventures.

Treaty of Salbai : Peace was finally established by the treaty of Salbai on 17 May 1782, which was signed by Sindhia on behalf of the Marathas and Anderson on that of the British. Under this treaty (1) the British were to return all the Maratha territories they had captured after the treaty of Purandhar ; (2) Haidar Ali was to restore all the British territories captured by him and the British would not get hostile to him so long as he remained friends with the Peshwa; (3) Raghoba was to fix up his residence within three months, and would get 25,000 rupees per month from the Peshwa if he "of his own accord repair to Sindhia." The British would not support his claims to the office of Peshwa any more. (4) The Marathas were not to have relations with any European power ; and (5) the English would not assist the Maratha enemies directly or indirectly.

The treaty of Salbai is said to be a great personal victory of Warren Hastings. Haidar Ali was expecting the arrival of the French help any moment, and Nana was determined to delay peace so as to be in a better position to reap fruits of the sacrifices the Marathas had made in the war. Hastings stole a march over the events, and not only shattered the plans of Haidar, but also brought about a division between the most important of the Maratha chiefs, Nana and Sindhia.

When the treaty was signed, the British fortunes in India had fallen to their lowest ebb. It was the best opportunity for the Marathas to establish their supremacy conclusively in India. But the opportunity was lost and the British never gave them a chance again.

1. See Ram Prakash, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

The treaty of Salbai, in fact, instead of punishing the British after their defeats, rewarded them with a promise that the Marathas would never again have relations with a European power. Instead of getting an unconditional surrender of Raghoba who had been the cause of all this bloodshed, the Marathas had to pay him a huge pension. The treaty "formed a turning-point in the history of the English in India," writes Lt. Col. C.E. Luard. It secured for the British "peace with the Marathas for twenty years, and, without the acquisition of any fresh territory, it established, beyond dispute, the dominance of the British as controlling factor in Indian politics, their subsequent rise in 1818 to the position of the paramount power, being an inevitable result of the position gained by the Treaty of Salbai."¹

There is no doubt that "this Anglo-Maratha war...emphatically discloses the vitality of the Maratha nation which had not been exhausted either with the disaster of Panipat or the death of their great Peshwa Madhav Rao," as G.S. Sardesai writes.² But the treaty of Salbai proved how mutual differences and selfish ambitions could still rob the Marathas of the rewards of their vitality. There is no doubt that Bassein was returned to the Marathas, but Salsette was still retained by the British. Among the Marathas, in fact, the greatest gain was made only by Sindhia whose influence over the Mughal Emperor was recognised and in whose possessions the British agreed never to interfere. Sindhia was placed in such a position as encouraged him to enter into a contest for supremacy with Nana himself. Subsequently, Nana had to suffer considerably on this account, and the contest did not come to an end before Mahadji Sindhia died in 1794.

The gain Sindhia made in his position may be judged from the fact that one of the terms of the treaty stipulated, "that the East India Company and the Peshwa request Sindhia to be the mutual guarantee for the proper observance of the conditions of the treaty, If either of them violate the conditions, he will endeavour to crush the aggressor."³

Little wonder, Nana refused to ratify the treaty, and carried on his contacts with Haidar Ali to reverse the position. But the death of the latter on 7 December 1782 made the case hopeless, and he put his signature on the treaty early in 1783.

It was in the time of Warren Hastings that the British fought the Second Mysore War which also makes an interesting study. We shall, however, discuss it only in a following chapter entitled Haidar Ali and the first two Anglo-Mysore Wars.

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V. p. 271.

2. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, III, p. 123.

3. *ibid.*, p. 119.

Constitutional Developments Under Hastings

REGULATING ACT OF 1773

In 1773 was passed by the British Parliament, an Act known as the Regulating Act which, according to G.N. Singh, "is of great constitutional importance, because it definitely recognised the political functions of the Company, because it asserted for the first time the right of the Parliament to dictate the form of Government for what was considered till then private possession of the Company ; and because it is the first of a long series of Parliamentary Statutes that altered the form of government in India."¹

The Circumstances. Perhaps one of the most important factors which led to the passing of this Act was the anxiousness of the British Parliament to secure a share in the Indian spoils. The spirit of bargaining had already come into existence in 1766 when the Government granted the Company to retain its powers and privileges on the condition that a sum of £400 00 a year would be paid in return. There was in fact no justification in the Parliament's claiming such a share in the Indian spoils, and if it did so it was, as according to Burke, nothing short of sanctioning "the bloodshed, this rapine, this villainy, this extortion" into which the East India Company had entered in India. Still however, the demands of the Parliament increased as it was supposed that the Company was making huge fortunes in India, till it was discovered that the Company had fallen deep into debts instead, and the Parliament secured a welcome opportunity of now asserting its right to the sovereignty of the Indian territories.

Then again there were the "English Nabobs," the servants of the Company, who were nicknamed so for amassing huge riches

1. Singh, G.N., *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*, pp. 14-15.

from illegal trade and exactions from the poor people of India. "Merchant sovereigns," said Sir William Meredith, "are always dangerous for their rule of selling is to take as much as they please, and the rule by which they buy is to pay as little as they please." These merchants were "cruel and shamelessly greedy" and they never hesitated from making "capital out of poor peoples' afflictions and utilised even the prevailing severe famine conditions in Bengal for their private lucre."¹ Their game, however did not end here. After making huge wealth in India, they went back to their own country and constituted themselves into a very formidable political power, purchasing seats and appearing in the British Parliament as representatives of the rotten boroughs to the chagrin of the landed aristocracy which considered the control of these boroughs as their monopoly. It was indeed a challenge to the vested interests in the British Parliament which were bound to retaliate and strike at the very roots of these Nabobs by developing the Parliamentary control over the Company's activities. Then the third factor was a constitutional anomaly which had been created by the East India Company's acquiring a sort of quasi-sovereign status in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. According to the existing English law an English subject could acquire territory only in the name of the Crown, and here in India if the Company had developed such quasi-sovereign status, it was evidently an anomalous situation which made it necessary for the British Crown either to regularise the Company's territorial position or to assume this position itself. But since the latter action was against the principle of the "sacredness of property" which was so fully recognised in the 18th century, an active Parliamentary interference had to be made to regulate the Company's position.

There were certain serious administrative problems in India itself which were bound ultimately to make the British Parliament intervene. The Company as its position was, Burke said, "did not seem to be merely a Company formed for the expansion of British commerce but in reality a delegation of the whole power and sovereignty of this kingdom sent into East." There was something wrong in the way the Company exercised this delegated power and sovereignty. The evils of the existing system of dual government have already been discussed at length. The accursed dual government which separated the authority from responsibility thereby bringing worst exploitation to the hands of the English servants of the Company, had created "such a scene of tyranny and plunder as makes one shudder," thus commented Horace Walpole. "We are", he continued, "Spaniards in our lust for gold and Dutch in our delicacy of obtaining it." The horrible effects of the dual government were revealed in the fact, as according to Lecky, that "on the appearance of a party of the English merchants, the villages were twice deserted and the shops shut and roads thronged with

1. Singh, G.N., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

panic-stricken fugitives." Indeed, the very name of England had been tarnished by the irresponsible and oppressive activities of the East India Company's servants. Under the dual system of government, there was no proper Judicial administration; the police, if there was any, oppressed instead of protecting; the revenue officials were tyrannical and at the top of it were the diverse controlling interests which clashed between them and made confusion worse confounded. Whatever might have been the motives for the Parliamentary interference, "a more powerful motive was the growing feeling in England ...that the nation itself assert the responsibility for seeing that the new and vast experiment of ruling of the distant and alien race was properly dictated."¹

Besides, there existed a loose and unconsolidated administration in the different territories acquired by the British in India. There were different Presidencies but no strong Central authority to control and guide them. The Presidencies declared war and entered into treaty alliances at their own discretion, thereby involving the entire authority of the Company often into trouble and disgrace which would very well have been avoided if there had been a proper administrative consolidation.

Several defeats and disasters which the British faced also had their effect on the nation's pride. The Company's defeat in 1769 at the hands of Haidar Ali of Mysore who practically dictated his own terms, was a shock to the British Parliament. The British prestige in India had indeed been undermined.

Another fact that necessitated the Parliamentary interference was the ever-rising appetite of the proprietors of the Company for dividends. The increasing fortunes of the Company's servants had inspired the proprietors to claim a share in the Indian spoils. Their dividends were raised in 1766 from 6% to 10%, but they were still not satisfied and the dividends had yet further to be raised to 12½%. Such was the picture of the East India Company's riches painted in England that the people recklessly gambled in its stocks which rose at a fast pace till ultimately it was discovered that the whole impression of the Company's fabulous profits was false and the Company was running fast towards bankruptcy.

Its debts rose to 6 million pounds, the beautiful picture of the financial prospects of the Company so laboriously painted by Clive in 1765, all appeared to vanish. And the Company which had been paying a huge annual tribute to the Government, now all of a sudden fell on its knees and begged the Government for immediate loans so as to avoid a sudden disgraceful crash. The whole British nation was stunned. It caused the sharpest dissensions amongst the

1. *Report on Constitutional Reforms*, 1918, p. 17, *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 186-88.

proprietors, and animated the Ministers to "the prosecution of their original scheme of deriving power to themselves, out of the innumerable disasters of the Company."

Such were thus the circumstances which led to the Parliamentary interference. A Select Committee was appointed to look into the Company's affairs. The Select Committee submitted as many as twelve reports on the subject while a Secret Committee submitted 6 and all these reports painted the blackest picture of the Company's affairs in India. The result of this was that the Government of Lord North drafted a Bill to arrange for a Parliamentary regulation of the Company's entire business "to the well being, nay, to the existence of the Company" itself as North declared. As it was to be expected, there was a bitter opposition from the Directors of the Company against the proposal of such violent interference in their affairs. Burke also declared that the Government's step was "an unconstitutional act founded on unconstitutional motive, springing from unconstitutional act." The Directors declared the Bill to be an attempt virtually to transfer the Company's powers to the Crown and destroy the Company's very existence. The power and privileges of the City of London being based "on the same security as those of the East India Company," the City of London did not lag behind in criticising the Bill as a wanton aggression on the principle of 'sacredness' of property.¹ Lord North, however, was determined, and moving through the jaws of opposition from the vested interests, the Bill did ultimately secure a passage in the Commons by 131 votes to 21 and in the Lords by 74 votes to 17.

Provisions of the Act

The Home Government. (1) One of the most important provisions regarding the Home Government² or the constitution of the Company was that the term of its 24 Directors was extended. Previously they used to be elected for one year only, but now they were to be elected for four years and one-fourth of them were to retire every year, the retiring Directors to become incapable of being elected again. (2) These Directors were required to lay all their correspondence with the Indian authorities regarding civil and military administration before the Secretary of State. All their correspondence concerning the revenues of India was regularly to be placed before the Treasury. This provision was made in order to assert the Parliamentary control over the Company. (3) The voting qualification for the Court of Proprietors was raised. From now onwards only those who had held a stock of £1,000 for at least 12 months preceding the date of

1. *Hansards Parliamentary Debates* Vol. XVII, pp. 5-7.

2. See for details Sharma, J.S., *India's Struggle for Freedom* (Select documents and sources in 3 vols), I, pp. 273-84.

elections would be able to enjoy the right to vote. Previously, this right was enjoyed by those who held a stock of £ 500 for six months. This change, obviously, was bound to curtail the number of proprietors entitled to vote. As many as 1,246 of them were thus disqualified. This might have been a welcome change in the existing constitution of the Company because as a result of this the chaotic state of affairs in the Court of Proprietors and dirty politics in their midst was sought to be removed. But an unfortunate feature of the new provision was that those possessing a stock of £ 3,000 were given two votes, while those possessing a stock of £ 10,000 were given four votes each. As a result of this, as Keith writes, the new measure, "failed to improve the quality of the Court of Proprietors or to prevent power being readily purchased by servants of the Company returning with the spoils of the East."¹

The Central Government of India. Certain provisions were made to establish Company's Central Government in India. (1) The Governor of Bengal was now to be known as the Governor-General of Bengal, getting an annual salary of £ 25,000. (2) In his functions he would be assisted by a Council of four members, each of whom was to get an annual salary of £ 10,000. (3) The Governor-General as well as his Councillors, were to hold office for five years, but any one of them could be removed earlier by the King after a due representation to the effect had been made by the Court of Directors. (4) A casual vacancy in the office of the Governor-General was to be filled up by the seniormost member of the Council, but if there was a casual vacancy in the Council, that could be filled up by the Company with the assent of the Crown. (5) In the proceedings of the Council the decisions were to be made by majority of the members present. In case, however, of the division among the members being equal, the Governor-General was allowed a casting vote. (6) This body, i.e. the Governor-General-in-Council, was given all the powers to govern the Company's territorial acquisitions, to administer the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and to supervise and control the general civil and military government of the Presidency. (7) The Governor-General-in-Council was also authorised to make rules and regulations and issue ordinances for the good government of the Company's settlement at Fort William and for that of the other factories and places subordinate to it. All these enactments, however, had to be reasonable and consistent with the British laws and they were to come into force only if they had been duly registered in the Supreme Court with its assent and approbation. They could also be disallowed by the King-in-Council. The Governor-General-in-Council was not empowered to legislate for the territories of Madras and Bombay. (8) The Governor-General-in-Council was to control and superintend the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras in their powers of making war and peace.

These Presidencies could not conclude treaties or enter into hostilities with the native powers except with the prior sanction of the Governor-General-in Council. The unfortunate part of the provision, however, was that in case of a serious emergency, these Presidencies could act in their own discretion. They could do so also in the case when they had received special orders from the Home authorities. (9) The Governor-General and the Council were to keep the Court of Directors fully informed of all their activities affecting the interests of the Company and they were also to work in entire obedience to the orders and instructions of the Court of Directors. (10) The first Governor-General and the members of his Council were named in the Act itself. Warren Hastings was appointed as the Governor-General, while Richard Barwell, General Clavering, Phillip Francis and Colonel Monson were appointed members of the Council.

Regarding the Presidencies. Previously each of the three Presidency Governments consisted of a President and a Council of senior merchants, the number of which varied between twelve and sixteen and in which the decisions were made by a majority vote. The three Presidencies were entirely independent of each other and were responsible direct to the Court of Directors. Now certain changes were made in their position. (1) As already mentioned, for matters of war and peace and for the purpose of concluding treaties with the native powers, these Presidencies were subordinated to the Governor-General-in-Council. The Governors-General-in-Council were empowered to suspend a Presidency which disobeyed their orders and instructions. In case of an emergency and in case of direct orders from the Directors, however these Presidencies could act in their discretion. (2) The act required these Presidencies to forward all the rules and regulations framed by them to the Governor-General-in-Council. The latter were also to be kept fully informed regarding the matters of revenue and the Government of the Presidency, wherever they affected the interests of the Company.

The Supreme Court of Judicature. (1) The Act also made a provision for setting up of a Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta. This court was to consist of a Chief Justice and three puisne judges. Sri Eljah Impey was named as the first Chief Justice while Lemaister, Chambers and Hyde were named as the puisne judges. (2) Each of the judges of the Supreme Court was required to have a standing of at least five years as a Barrister of England and Ireland and he would hold office at the King's pleasure. (3) The authority of these judges was assimilated to that of the judges of the King's Bench. (4) The Court was authorised to establish rules of practice and process. It could appoint the necessary subordinate staff, the salary of the members of which, however, had to be approved by the Governor-General. These judges could also regulate the court fees with the Governor-General's assent. They were to nominate

three persons out of whom one was to be selected by the Governor-General and Council for the office of Sheriff. The admission of advocates and attorneys, was, however, entirely placed in their control.

(5) The jurisdiction and the powers of the Court were very wide. It was to be a court of Oyer and Terminer and Goal Delivery in and for the town of Calcutta, the factory of Fort William and the other factories subordinate to it. The Court was to superintend the Court of Collector, Sessions and the Court of Requests and was empowered to issue to these Courts the writs of *certiorary*, *mandamus*, *error* or *procedendo*. The full ecclesiastical, civil and criminal jurisdiction over the British subjects in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and over all the persons employed directly or indirectly in the service of the Company, the powers of a Court of Equity and those of a Court of Admiralty for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the other adjacent territories and islands under the jurisdiction of the Company, were also given to it. The Court was also empowered to punish murders, piracies and treasons committed on the high seas by those placed under its jurisdiction. It would also hear a suit by a subject of His Majesty against an inhabitant of India within the territories under its jurisdiction, provided that the inhabitant concerned had already agreed in a contract that in case of a dispute, the authority of the Supreme Court would be admitted. The cause of action here, however, had to exceed Rs 500. The suits could originate in the Supreme Court or they could be brought by an appeal from a Mofussil Court.

(6) In the civil cases of the value of over 1000 pagodas, an appeal could be carried from this Court to the King-in-Council within six months. For an appeal in the criminal cases the consent of the Court was required. All offences of which the Supreme Court had cognisance, were to be tried by a Jury of British subjects resident in Calcutta. (7) The Court was, however, not competent to try, hear or determine an indictment or information against the Governor-General, or a member of the Council for any offence (not being treason or felony) a Governor-General or a member of his Council might be charged with having committed in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Court. (8) The Act also expressly declared that the Governor-General, a member of his Council or a Judge was not liable to be imprisoned or arrested upon any action, proceeding (civil) or suit in the Supreme Court. (9) The Governor-General and Council were empowered to act as Justices of Peace and hold quarter sessions for the purpose. (10) The Governor-General, a member of the Council, or a judge of the Supreme Court committing an offence could be tried in the King's Bench in England.

Regarding the Flagrant Errors of the Past. In order to reform certain existing abuses, the Act also provided that henceforward (1)

if any civil or military officer of the Company accepted a present from a native power or a prince, he would forfeit double the amount and would also be liable to be removed from India. (2) No person engaged in the duties of collection of revenue was to acquire any State monopoly or engage in a trade. (3) No subject of His Majesty was to charge more than 12 per cent interest on the money lent by him. (4) The Governor-General, the members of the Council and the judges were also forbidden from engaging in trade or receiving presents except for the Company itself. (5) One who having committed a breach of trust in the service of the Company, was removed to England as punishment, could be restored to his service only if three-fourths of the Directors and the proprietors had given their consent to the effect. (6) To compensate the servants of the Company for the loss of their trade privileges, their salaries, including those of the Governor-General and the members of his Council, were considerably enhanced. (7) And finally, the Act empowered the Court of King's Bench in England to punish an offence, misdemeanour or crime against a subject of his Majesty or an offence against the Act itself.

A Review of the Regulating Act

Commenting on the significance and the merits of the Act, thus remarked Lord North : "Every article in it is framed with a view to placing the affairs of the Company on a solid, clear and decisive establishment." It was for the first time that an attempt was made to set up a written constitution in place of an arbitrary rule of the Company for the British possessions in India. And perhaps the greatest importance of the Act lay in the fact that it provided a framework for all the constitutional enactments which later on were to follow.

Another importance of the Act lay in the fact that it introduced certain changes in the Home Government whereby the chaotic state of affairs in the Court of Proprietors was sought to be removed. By raising the qualifications of the voters, their number was considerably decreased thereby concentrating the scattered power of the Company into a few more interested and better experienced hands. And besides, "The long tenure and partial renewal provided by the Act to the Directors ; brought security and continuity in their policy."¹ It is said that when the Directors were elected for one year only, they spent the first half of their year in office in discharging the obligations to their supporters, while the other half of the year was spent in canvassing for support in the coming new elections. The extension of the term of the office of the Directors from one year to four years removed this evil.

Nor was the establishment of a Parliamentary control over the

1. Punniiah, K. V., *Constitutional History of India*, p. 23.

affairs of the Company less significant. The Act required of the Company to submit regular reports on the revenues of India to the British Treasury. The reports concerning the civil and military Government of India were to be regularly submitted to the Secretary of State. This indeed, was the first step towards subordinating the commercial interests of the Company to the political interests of India, which ultimately led to the abolition of the Company itself, when the reins of India were taken over directly by the Crown.

Then the Company had started its career as a purely commercial concern, but by its acquisition of territories, the rights of Diwani, etc., its character had changed. It started handling political power for which it had no recognition in the Charters issued to it by the British Government. The Regulating Act corrected this confusing position and recognised the Company as it had really become.

The Act also severely curtailed some of the powers of patronage hitherto enjoyed by the Company in its own right. The first Governor-General, the members of his Council, the first Chief Justice and his colleagues, were all appointed in the Act itself. And for the subsequent appointments in these offices, the Company was bound to secure a prior approval of the Crown for its nominees. After this the Crown slowly developed its control in appointments of the officers in subordinate positions also, thus ultimately leading to the civil services of India, being thrown open to an open competition.

Besides, the Act introduced a collegiate system in order to prevent the Governor-General from collecting autocratic powers in his hands. And it was also important for the fact that it "was the first measure by which an European Government assumed the responsibility for governing territories acquired by it outside Europe and inhabited by civilised people". And yet further, the Company's territorial acquisitions in India had so far been considered its private concern, but the Act asserted the right of the British Parliament to control the Company's administrative activities. The Act, indeed, was a "bold attempt at securing good government in the Company's territory in India without the Crown's directly assuming the responsibility for the same."¹

The efforts of the British Parliament to stamp out through this Act the corruption, abuses of private trade and acceptance of gifts by the servants of the Company, were also no less significant. The highest officials like the Governor-General and the members of his Council, were entirely forbidden from entering into any private commercial transactions in India and the direction that no European would lend money to the Indians at more than a 12 per cent interest, was also calculated to check the exploitation of the Indians at the

1. Sharma, S.R., *A Constitutional History of India*, p. 25.

hands of the servants of the Company.

The Act was also important for the fact that it made the first attempt to centralise the administrative machinery in India, which was a step towards the right direction. The vast territories that the Company had acquired required to be consolidated. The unification of some of the conflicting interests of the three Presidencies was also no less necessary. The act clearly laid down that the Governor-General and his Council were to control and direct the Presidencies in their relations with the Indian powers. Though the permission to the Presidencies in the Act to use their discretion in times of emergency was unfortunate, yet an amateurish attempt was made at setting up on supreme authority for all the dominions of the Company in India.

Yet, there were certain defects in the Act which created a sort of confusion, both in the Home Government and in the administrative machinery of India. In the constitution of the Company, an attempt had been made to make the authority of the Directors more effective and efficient, but "the alteration in the voting qualification of the General Court did not improve the existing state of affairs, because the laudable object of preventing the retired Company's servants from gaining an excessive influence in the Councils of the Company was not realised. On the other hand, the Court of Directors was transformed into a more or less permanent oligarchy."¹ In disfranchising as many as 1,246 holders of stock, the Act seemed to have followed two principles, first, that the greater property would mean integrity of conduct, and secondly, that a small number would be a security against disorder and faction. But in practice both these objects were defeated.

Nor was the Parliamentary control over the affairs of the Company quite adequate. The Company was required to submit reports on its revenue, civil and military activities in India. But no effective machinery was set up in England to scrutinise these reports and thereby watch the activities of the Company's servants.

The powers granted to the Governor-General also left much to be desired. Warren Hastings himself summed up his position thus : "My situation is truly painful and mortifying, deprived of powers with which I have been invested by a solemn Act of legislation, denied the respect which is due to my station and character and condemned to bear my share in the responsibility of measures which I do not approve." As laid down in the Act, in the Governor-General's Council the decisions were to be made by a majority vote. The Governor-General was given a casting vote in case of an equal division. This was bound to reduce his power and position to almost a

1. Singh, G.N , *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2. See *Cambridge History of India*, V: p. 227.

cypher. He was constantly overruled, his policies were disapproved and he had to carry out the decisions which he himself had opposed. The situation was bound to become yet more serious when the persons like Francis had come to India expressly for the purpose of defeating the policy of Warren Hastings and ultimately succeeding to his position. Barwell comments thus, the 'three Councillors had embarked from the very outset upon a pre-determined, pre-consulted system of opposition.'¹ Nor had Francis and Clavering among the Councillors, any previous experience in the Company's affairs of India. But while they lacked the proper knowledge, due to their prejudice they interfered in every matter of administration. Not only that, they asserted their position and tried to dominate and weaken the position of the Governor-General. As a result of their determined opposition, Warren Hastings' position as the Governor-General became so precarious, that in 1776 he actually began seriously to think of resigning his office. It was luckily for him that Monson and Clavering died shortly after and the opposition having thus been removed, Warren Hastings heaved a sigh of relief.

Nor were the Governor-General and his Council given a complete control over the other two Presidencies. The provision that in case of an emergency these Presidencies could act in their discretion, in fact, nullified the whole power that was given to the Governor-General. Wars were declared and alliances were entered into without seeking the prior permission of the Supreme Government in Bengal. The hostilities which these Presidencies developed against Haidar Ali of Mysore and the rising power of the Marathas had, indeed, thrown the Supreme Government into a triff of helplessness and hopelessness. While the Supreme Government had to suffer a serious loss, financial as well as human, it had no control over the policy under which the wars were commenced.

The relations between the Governor-General and his Council on the one hand, the Supreme Court of Judicature on the other, were also left much undefined. The powers of the Supreme Court to judge the legality of the administrative cause of the Governor-General and his Council were not clearly stated. Thus, while the Governor-General and his Council confirmed authority of the country courts of Zamindars, the Supreme Court issued writs of habeas corpus to counter the decisions made by the functionaries of these courts and in many cases it put these functionaries into prisons. The Governor-General and Council issued a notification in 1777 whereby declaring that the Zamindars not being the servants of the Company, were outside the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court refused to admit this notification and ordered the Sheriff's officers to arrest the Raja of Kasijura, to counter which the Supreme Government had to send a contingent of sepoys to surround the

1. *ibid.*, p. 225; Trotter, L.J., *Warren Hastings*, 1962, pp. 89-117.

Sheriff's officers and secure the release of the Raja. The Supreme Court retaliated by committing the Company's attorney to prison for the alleged contempt of Court.

The jurisdiction and the powers of the Supreme Court were, indeed, left very much obscure and undefined. Clarity and precision were absent, where they were required the most. "The provisions of the act were so vague and undefined in their working and were couched in positive rather than negative terms, that they obscured the intention of the authors and lent themselves to more than one interpretation and so brought about serious conflicts between the Supreme Court and the Supreme Council."¹ Thus, while the Court claimed a jurisdiction in matters of revenue, the Supreme Council denied it arguing that the provisions of the Act were against the court's assertion of this authority. The Court claimed the right to try the judicial and the revenue officers of the Company, while the Supreme Government opposed it. The Act extended jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to "any person employed by or in service of the Company" and to "all the British subjects." But it nowhere clearly defined as to who the British subjects were. In one sense only those who were born Englishmen, were the British subjects. In the second sense the entire population of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were the British subjects. While in yet another sense only those who lived in Calcutta and not the entire population of Bengal, were in a true sense the British subjects. Then the question was, what did the employment to the Company actually constitute? Were the Zamindars or the farmers of revenue, servants of the Company? The vague provision of the Act which placed all those directly or indirectly employed by the Company, and those employed by the British subjects, under the jurisdiction of the Court, was made a full use of by its judges who extended their jurisdiction far and wide. People were arrested in the far off places and brought all the way to the seat of the Supreme Court. The procedural technicalities, the unavoidable delay and severe and inhuman punishments left the people terror-stricken looking aghast towards the sky and cursing their fate for the unwelcome protection of the Court under which they had been placed. The Court, as Lord Macaulay wrote, 'came from beyond the Black Water as the people of India with mysterious horror called the sea, it consisted of judges not one of whom was familiar with the usages of millions over whom they claimed boundless authority.'

The Act was also not clear regarding the law which was to be administered by the Supreme Court. Was it to be the law of the plaintiff or that of the defendant? Was it to be the law of Hindus or of Muslims? The judges knew only the English law. The bailiffs being ignorant of the customs and the usages of the people, while enforcing the decrees of the Court, violated the privacy of the women's apartments, entered into the places of domestic worship, and

1. Punniiah, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-21.

idols 'were dragged from their places by profane hands, and thrown amongst the heap of household furniture and timber which were collected to answer the needs of the execution.' The entire procedure of the Court was "founded upon laws and distinctions which they (the people of Bengal) were utterly incapable of comprehending." The records of the Courts were kept in unknown characters, "its sentences were pronounced in unknown sounds." The people were bound to be terrified.¹ Further, the Supreme Court having refused to recognise the authority of the indigenous courts of the Company and having refused to administer the personal laws of the people, forced them to accept "the transported laws of the freedom."

The Act tried to draw a distinction between the Company's management of its territories and revenues of Bengal Bihar and Orissa on the one hand and the civil and military government of the Presidency of Fort William on the other. This it was compelled to do because while due to the territorial acquisition of the Company it had to regulate its affairs and look after the interests of the Company's employees, it could not interfere in its powers on the Diwani lands which it owed to the Mughal Emperor and over which, hence the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor still persisted. That was the reason that the Act could make regulations only for the good government of the Company's settlements at Fort William and other factories and places subordinate to it. It had no authority to do this for the whole provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In the same way, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was also extended only to the town of Calcutta, the Fort William and the places subordinate to it. But the distinction between the Company's authority secured from the British Crown and that secured from the Mughal Emperor was not easy to maintain throughout. And it was this which resulted into a confusion. Thus while the Supreme Court was to exercise its jurisdiction over the British subjects and those employed by them and the Company, it was also empowered to prevent any oppression of the people of India by the servants of the Company. Obviously therefore, it could hear the complaints of those people too who were clearly sought to be put outside its jurisdiction. Thus again, while the effort of the Act was to regulate the Company's Government in its Settlements, unconsciously it started controlling the servants of the Company in their Diwani lands as well.

The Act, in fact, neither gave "the State a definite control over the Company, nor the Directors a definite control over their servants nor the Governor-General a definite control over Madras and Bombay." The report of the Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, clearly summed up the situation. The Act, according to the report, "created

1. See *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp 240-47, Trotter, *op cit*, pp 133-43

a Governor-General who was powerless before his own Council and an executive that was powerless before Supreme Court, itself immune from all responsibilities for peace and welfare of the country . . .”¹

At the time the amending bill was brought in the Parliament in 1781, Bouton Rouse commented : “Civil discord had taken place; the powers of Government are at war with one another ; and it would not much surprise me to learn by the next advices, either that the Supreme Court has inflicted death on the members of your Government, or that your Governor-General and Council have shipped off His Majesty’s judges for Great Britain.”

After all this is said, let us, however, consider the circumstances and limitations under which the authors of the Act had to work. The worst criticised point of the Act is that in many respects its provisions were vague. But few have tried to understand that in certain respects this vagueness was deliberately maintained. The Company was holding its powers in India from two sources, i.e., the British Crown and the Mughals. Under these circumstances, obviously, the British Crown could assert its sovereignty only on the rights the Company had secured from the British Parliament. The Crown’s effort to assert its sovereign rights on the Company’s Diwani lands could succeed only if the Mughal sovereignty was entirely negated, which in fact was a step too violent yet to take. On the other hand it was not possible for the Crown to give a due recognition to the Mughal sovereignty in the Act either. For, the Mughal sovereignty in fact was nominal and slowly waning. Obviously therefore, the Act had to be vague in this respect : neither clearly recognising the Mughal sovereignty nor expressly rejecting it : neither clearly asserting its rights over the Diwani lands nor expressly keeping calm over the matter.

Nor could the Crown openly reject the sanctity of property rights a maxim which at the time was held most strongly, both by the Parliament and the general people of England. The assertion of the sovereign rights of the Crown over the entire field of the Company’s activities would also have brought to the Crown an enormous mass of patronage for which the British Government was as yet neither prepared nor experienced. Then the Regulating Act was the first enactment of its kind being handled by the Parliament. The problems of the Company’s territorial acquisitions in India were too wide and varied for the members of Parliament sitting thousands of miles away to comprehend their full import. And last but not least, besides the sanctity of property rights there was the theory of the Separation of Powers initiated by Montesquieu, and catching fast the imagination of the thinking population of England. Under these circumstances, therefore, Ilbert rightly comments. “The defects of

the Act were natural, partly because of the necessity of the case and partly because the Parliament was facing the difficult question of constitutional law." "The object of the Act was good," as Bouton Rouse described in the Commons, though, "the system that it established was imperfect."¹

It may be necessary to give here a few lines as to how the most glaring defects of the Act were ultimately removed. The Act was passed in 1773, but it was only its working in India for a long period of years which threw up its defects one by one to be duly amended. No satisfactory controlling machinery of the Government of the Crown had been established in the Act to direct the Company on the basis of its reports received. This defect was removed by the Pitt's India Act of 1784 which set up a Board of Six Commissioners to direct and supervise the Company's civil, military and revenue affairs in India.

The Regulating Act had not given a full controlling authority to the Governor-General in relation to his Council. This glaring defect was removed only in 1786, when Lord Cornwallis refused to accept office of the Governor-General unless he was given an overruling power over his colleagues. The bitter experience of Warren Hastings was before everybody, and the Government of Pitt in England did not hesitate to agree to the condition forwarded by Cornwallis.

The weakness of the Supreme Government of Bengal in its relations with the other Presidencies were removed, again by the Pitt's India Act of 1784. Under a provision in this Act, in all matters of war, peace and relations with the native powers the Presidencies had strictly to work under the supervision and control of the Governor-General. Besides, it was also provided that henceforward the Court of Directors too would try only to control affairs of the Presidencies mainly through the Governor-General and Council.

The vagueness of the Regulating Act with regard to the relations of the Supreme Council with the Supreme Court in India was removed by the amending Act of 1781, which expressly declared that (1) the Supreme Court would have no jurisdiction on matters relating to the revenue settlement and revenue collection, which were to remain under the exclusive authority of the Governor-General and Council: and that (2) the Governor-General and Council were to be subject to the authority directly of a competent Court in England, and in no way to that of the Supreme Court of Calcutta. This is how the most glaring defects of the Regulating Act were removed. But, as obvious, the matter took as many as thirteen years and it was only at the time of the appointment of Lord Cornwallis as the

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V. pp. 189-92; Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Governor-General that the adverse situation created by the Regulating Act was brought completely under control.

THE AMENDING LEGISLATION

Bengal Judicature Act 1781

Some of the provisions of the Regulating Act, as already alluded to, were very unfortunate. The relations between the Supreme Court and the Supreme Government soon grew bitter, more particularly in connection with the Kasijora case, and ultimately it was no more possible for the two institutions to pull together. The Governor-General and Council submitted a petition to the British Crown wherein the existing circumstances in India were explained and an urgent request was made to the British Parliament to intervene and correct the situation. As a result, two committees, i.e. a Select Committee and a Secret Committee, were appointed to make an enquiry and submit their proposals. The Select Committee which was placed under the chairmanship of Edmund Burke, was asked to study the matter and make recommendations for the improvement of the relations between the Supreme Council and the Supreme Court, while the Secret Committee's term of reference was to enquire into the situation which had led to the Second Mysore War and to report on the existing conditions of the Company's territorial acquisitions in the East. The Select Committee headed by Burke submitted as many as twelve reports in which some of the defects of the Regulating Act were bitterly criticised. It was on the basis of these reports that the Bengal Judicature Act was passed for the purpose of making certain amendments in the system established by the Regulating Act.

The provisions. The Bengal Judicature Act declared in its preamble the need of an efficient system for the collection of revenues, the importance of a strong Supreme Government at Bengal and the advisability of respecting the beliefs and prejudices of the people of India. In the very preamble it was clearly shown that the Supreme Council had won in its contest with the Supreme Court.

The more essential provisions dealing with the Governor-General and Council were that, (1) the body was henceforth placed clearly outside the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court for anything it did in its official capacity, with certain very minor exceptions. (2) The Act recognised the appellate authority of the Governor-General and Council acting as the *sadar diwani adalat*. And it was also declared that in civil cases of or exceeding the value of £5,000 the appeal could be carried from the *sadar diwani adalat*, to the King-in-Council. (3) The Act gave full authority to the Governor-General and Council to make regulations for the provincial Councils and Courts. The Supreme Court previously refused to register some of such

regulations ; now the Governor-General and Council were absolved of this necessity. It was, however, laid down that the copies of the regulations thus made had to be sent to the Directors and the Secretary of State in England, and that they could be amended or disallowed by the king-in-Council. If however they were neither amended nor disallowed within two years, they would continue remaining in force. (4) The Governor-General and Council were given a full authority to deal with all the offences connected with the collection of revenues. But the punishment awarded in this connection could not extend to perpetual imprisonment, maiming or death.

Regarding the Supreme Court, the Act provided that (1) the officials of the country court were now no more to be under its jurisdiction for their acts done in an official capacity. (2) The Indians in the service of the Company or in that of the European British subjects in India were not to be tried in the Supreme Court in matters of succession to lands and goods and in those of inheritance. They could be tried only in civil cases where the parties had agreed, or for trespass. (3) The Supreme Court, however, was authorised to try all the inhabitants in Calcutta including the Indians and British on the condition that the law to be used was that of the defendants, i.e. the Muslims to be tried under the Muslim law and the Hindu defendants under the Hindu laws. (4) The Act expressly declared that the Supreme Court would keep in view the religious and social usages and the customs of the Indians while enforcing its decrees and process. The rights of the masters and fathers of the families of the Hindus and the Muslims were to be respected according to their respective laws, and no act done under the caste requirements would be deemed criminal. (5) The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in connection with the collection of revenue was completely finished, and henceforward no person could be tried by it merely for the reason of his being a farmer or a landlord. (6) The Court was empowered to lay down suitable forms of process to be used in the Indian cases with the due approval of the King.

The Act also required that henceforward the Company would keep regular registers of the names, occupations and some other particulars of the Indians employed by it. The necessary relief was also given to certain persons imprisoned in Bengal under the orders of the Supreme Court acting under the provisions of the Regulating Act.

Such were thus the provisions of the Bengal Judicature Act, which clearly decided the contest in favour of the Supreme Government. This however was no aspersion on the character of the Supreme Court, for the Act showed its hearty appreciation of the fact that they had interpreted the law in its correct sense. The Supreme Government being freed of some of its fetters, was now put on road to a more efficient working in India.

Dundas' India Bill

As already referred to, the Parliament had appointed two committees for investigation into the affairs of India. The Bengal Judicature Act was passed on the basis of the reports submitted by the Select Committee headed by Burke. The Secret Committee headed by Dundas had submitted its six separate reports in which it had given its views on the Second Mysore War and made a bitter criticism of the oppressive behaviour of the servants of the Company in India. "A country oppressed by private rapacity and deprived of its vital resources by the enormous quantities of the current species annually exported in the remittance of private fortunes," as Hastings himself had commented regarding the existing state of affairs in Bengal, "required certain drastic measures to set the people free of the British oppression."¹ But the authorities in England were helpless. The House of Commons had adopted a resolution in 1782, bitterly criticising the administrative activities of Warren Hastings. The resolution demanded the Governor-General to be recalled. The Directors agreed with the resolution but still Hastings could not be recalled because the proprietors defied both the resolution of the Parliament and the authority of the Directors. "Thus it was made clear," writes Keith, "that the Company's Directors could not control its servants, nor the State, the Company while events in India in the defiance of Calcutta by Madras, proved that the main Presidency could not control those subordinate to it."² The situation obviously was dismal, and the matter came to a head when in 1783 the Company petitioned the Crown for financial relief. The Coalition Ministry of Fox and North studied the matter and it was under these circumstances that Dundas, an Opposition member of the Parliament, brought in his Bill.

The essential provisions of the bill presented by Dundas was, that (1) the King should have a full authority to recall from India the principal servants of the Company including the Governor-General. (2) The authority of the Governor-General within his Council should be strengthened and he be given a veto power in special cases authorising him to act in opposition to the opinion of his Council. (3) The Governor-General should also be empowered to hold office of Commander-in-Chief. (4) The powers and authority of the Governor-General and Council over those of the Presidencies should be considerably enhanced. And (5) the Zamindars displaced in Bengal as a result of the Quinquennial Settlement be restored.

Dundas' Bill, if passed, should obviously have improved the conditions in India to a considerable extent. But he being in opposition, there was little possibility of his success. The Bill was rejected,

1. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

2. *ibid.*, p. 94.

yet the urgency of the matter was emphasised and the required ministerial action soon followed.

Fox's East India Bill 1783

The matter could not be slept over for long. The activities of the Governor-General in India were passing out of control, the oppression of the Company's servants knew no bounds and the refusal of the Presidencies to work under the control of the Supreme Government of India was making the confusion worse confounded. Dundas' Bill had emphasised the urgency of a reform. The reports of the Committees were before the Coalition Ministry, and on 20 November 1783 Fox took up the matter and brought his East India Bill in the Parliament.

The Provisions. In its provisions the Act dealt with two separate bodies : a Board of seven Commissioners and a Subordinate Board of nine Assistant Directors, which was required to be set up.

Dealing with the Board of Seven Commissioners, the Act required that (1) the Courts of the proprietors and the Directors be swept away and a board of seven commissioners or Directors be set up in their place (2) These commissioners should hold office for four years only unless removed earlier by the King on an address of either House of Parliament (3) The commissioners were, in the circumstances, named in the Act itself, but vacancies in the Board were to be filled up by the Crown. (4) The seat of the Board of commissioners was to be in England and their minutes were subject to inspection by the Parliament. (5) This Board was to be given a full authority to appoint or dismiss any person of any status in the employment of the Company. (6) The Board was also to have a full controlling authority in the administration of the Revenues and territories of the Company in India.

Regarding the Subordinate Board the Bill required that (1) a board of subordinate directors, nine in number, be set up in England. (2) The members of this board be chosen by Parliament from amongst the proprietors holding the largest stocks with the Company. The casual vacancies in the board were to be filled up by the Court of proprietors. (3) The members of the board were to hold office for five years, but could be removed earlier by the King on an address being presented by either House of Parliament. This board was to be given full authority to manage the commercial transactions of the Company in India.

The Bill also made certain very important provisions forbidding the Company's servants in India from accepting presents, the conditions and circumstances under which the British troops should be loaned to the Indian princes and regarding the welfare of the people

of India against the oppression of the European servants of the Company.

The Rejection. The Bill as Grant Robertson writes, was "a sincere and statesmanlike effort to deal with a great problem on comprehensive lines."¹ Burke supported it for the reason that it provided for a "system which would operate to the deliverance of the empire." For, he said, the Company's government was "one of the most corrupt and destructive tyrannies that probably ever existed in the world." He said, there was "not a single prince or state who ever put trust in the Company who is not utterly ruined." Fox also commented that the Bill "was a child not of choice but of necessity."

But the Bill met with a severe opposition as it was brought in Parliament. King George III condemned it as a deceitful attempt to transfer the immense patronage of India into the hands of a body which was notorious for its corrupt activities. The shareholders of the Company considered it as an attempt to destroy their private rights. The more important points around which the criticism revolved were that if such an immense patronage of India was transferred into the hands of a Board of Commissioners controlled by a party in power, the latter would corrupt the whole Parliament in its efforts to remain perpetually in power. Grenville commented that the obvious and unavoidable effect of the Bill "would be to transfer the boundless patronage of India to the Crown or rather to vest it for five years in the person of the Minister and his adherence, whether in or out of power." Further, it was contended that the commissioners proposed for the Board were all the supporters of the party of Fox, which clearly showed how the power could be misused. Lord Thurlow termed the Bill "a most atrocious violation of private property."

In violation of the constitutional practices, the King plainly declared that he who votes for it would be "not only not his friend but his enemy." Under these conditions the House of Lords rejected the Bill, though it had been duly passed by the House of Commons. Fox heatedly commenting on the situation, declared on 17 December, "the deliberation of this night must decide whether we are to be free men or slaves; whether the House of Commons is to be the palladium of members or the organ of despotism; whether we are henceforth to possess a voice of our own, or to be the more mechanical echo of secret influence."² The thunders of Fox however were of no avail and the Bill met its destined failure. It was said that it was not because of any defects in the more essential provisions of the Bill that it was rejected; the reason which incited the opposition and invited the interference of George III to bring about its ultimate

1. Robertson, Grant, *England under Hanoverians*, see pp. 299-307.

2. See *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 196-200.

failure, was the unpopularity of the North-Fox Coalition and the irresponsible attitude of Fox whereunder he chose only his own supporters as the members of the Board. It was said that had Fox and North been a bit more considerate, and had they accommodated the other parties in the Board, the Bill might have been passed.

PITT'S INDIA ACT 1784

Fox's India Bill, as we have seen, though passed by the Commons had met with a rare opposition in the Lords. Nor had King George III concealed his hostile views on it. The Bill having been rejected, the King dismissed the Ministry of Fox and North and invited Pitt the Younger to form a new Cabinet. In January 1784 Pitt brought in a new Bill on India, but having no clear majority in the Commons, he had to face a bitter discomfiture. At his recommendation the House was dissolved, new elections were held and in these elections luckily Pitt having secured a triumphant majority, the way was cleared for him to bring back his Bill and get it passed. The Bill thus passed is known as Pitt's India Act 1784.

In order to grasp clearly the provisions of this Act which according to Pitt himself aimed at permanency of a system as against Fox's India Bill which aimed at the permanency of men, it may be necessary to comprehend clearly the problems the Bill was called upon to solve.

The most serious problem perhaps was the unbridled authority the proprietors of the Company were trying to assume. The Regulating Act had succeeded neither in establishing a clear control of the Directors over the Company's servants, nor in strengthening the powers of the Parliament over the Company. The failure of the combined forces of the Parliament and Directors in trying to recall Hastings and Hornby in May 1782, was a sad commentary on the existing situation. It clearly proved that the proprietors of the Company were still strong enough to defy them both. They had to be dislodged from this position if the State was not to become completely defunct in controlling the activities of its own subjects.

Nor could the efforts of the Governor-General of India to exploit the situation in his own favour be tolerated. Under these circumstances, writes G.N. Singh, "Clive and Warren Hastings seemed almost as free from constitutional control as the Proconsuls who destroyed the Roman Republic." Wars were freely waged and treaties and alliances made. But in all this the Crown nowhere came into the picture. It was done in the name of the Company and one wondered whether it or the Crown was sovereign !

The Presidencies were amenable to the control of the Governor-

General, but no more than the latter himself was amenable to the control of the Directors. They drove the Company into expensive wars, but always tried to shirk the responsibility of taking into proper confidence either the Governor-General or some other higher authority. The two Anglo-Mysore Wars and the First Anglo-Maratha War were the examples to be seriously taken notice of. The recrudescence of these events had to be checked before it was too late.

Nor could the illegal affluence and opulence of the English 'Nabobs' be tolerated any longer. While on the one hand the activities of these 'Nabobs', the English servants of the Company in India, were baneful to the people of this country before whose eyes, as Burke remarked, there was nothing "but endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting"; on the other hand the invasion of these upstarts on the Parliamentary seats which they were in a better position to buy and fight for, shocked the vested interests in the British Parliament. They had to be controlled before they subverted the entire constitutional order.

The loss of the American colonies had also increased the importance of India as a field of economic exploitation, as Pitt admitted while introducing his Bill. The British had to increase their trade with India to compensate for the loss of the American markets which could be done effectively only when the Governmental machinery in India was more efficient and under a better control of the Home authorities.

Nor did the Home authorities lack entirely the humanitarian considerations. The extension of the superior English culture and an efficient governmental machinery for the moral and material development of the people of India was supposed to be essential to render the contact between the two nations a blessing for India; but the existing government of the Company, as Burke remarked, being "one of the most corrupt and destructive tyrannies that probably ever existed in the world,"¹ was incapable of doing this.

The necessity of a Parliamentary interference had already been realised at the time of the Dundas Bill, and later on at that of the introduction of Fox's Bill. The essential problems and the ways to handle them had indeed already been discussed and determined. Or in other words the way had been paved and Pitt had to take up the matter, and after his re-election the Bill was duly presented and passed by both the Houses of the Parliament. It was placed on the Statute Book in August 1784.

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V, pp. 197-98.

The Provisions

The problem Pitt had been called upon to solve was very vast and concerned not only the administrative machinery of India but also the very constitution of the Company and the necessary machinery of the Crown to control this concern. Due provisions, therefore, were made to meet all these requirements.

The Home Government. The provisions of the Act dealing with the Home Government may conveniently be divided into two parts : (1) Those concerning the Board of Control and (2) those concerning the Court of Directors.

The Board of Control. (1) The lack of a proper machinery for the control of the Company's activities had been seriously felt. To meet this requirement a Board of six Commissioners was set up in England which was to be called a Board of Control. It was to consist of a Secretary of State, the Chancellor of Exchequer and four other members who would be taken from the Privy Council. These members were to be appointed by the Crown and were to hold office during the Crown's pleasure. (2) Their salaries and expenses were to be paid by the Parliament, which however would be charged on the revenues of India provided that maximum amount so charged would be £16,000. (3) The Secretary of State was to work as the Chairman of this Board, exercising a casting vote when there was an equal division in its meetings. The quorum of the meeting was fixed at three. (4) So far as the powers of the Board were concerned, it was authorised to superintend and control all the revenue and civil activities and the military forces held by the British in the East Indies. (5) The Directors of the Company were required to supply to the Board, the copies of all the communications received from India of all the resolutions, orders and minutes of their proceeding and of their proposed despatches to the Indian authorities. (6) The orders and despatches proposed by the Directors before they were actually sent to India, had to be approved by the Board which could modify the drafts or substitute new ones in their place and require the Directors to send the same to the authorities in India. Such orders and despatches of the Directors could also be rejected and disapproved outright by the Board. (7) Further, the Board was empowered to ask the Directors to prepare a particular despatch or an order on a particular matter and transmit it to India. If the Directors failed to do this within 14 days, the Board could prepare the required despatch or an order itself and require the Directors to transmit it to India. The Board also could send certain secret directions to the Secret Committee of the Directors to be conveyed to India and require of the Committee not to disclose the matter to the other members of the Court. (8) The Board was, however, given no authority in the appointment of the Company's servants in India. The patronage was thus entirely left to the Directors.

(9) The Court of Proprietors who for sometime had been a

source of serious trouble, were completely deprived of their power to counter the orders and resolutions of the Directors which had secured due approval of the Board of Control.

The Court of Directors. (1) The Court of Directors was permitted to continue as it was and its commercial privileges were left intact. (2) The Directors also retained their full powers in the appointment of all the servants of the Company. (3) A provision was made for setting up of a Secret Committee of not more than three members of the Court of Directors, to which certain secret matters could be referred by the Board, which were not to be divulged to the other members of the Court. (4) The commercial privileges of the Court having been left intact, it was empowered to appeal to the King-in-Council in case of any encroachment of its rights by the Board. (5) It was also declared that all the reductions and retrenchments in the civil and military establishments were to be under an exclusive control of the Directors.

The Central Government of India. Regarding the Central Government in India, the Act declared that (1) the Governor-General's Council would henceforth consist of three other members besides the Governor-General himself as against the four members who previously constituted the Council. One of these members was to be the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in India. The Council, as it was reconstituted, clearly gave more effective casting vote to the Governor-General who by winning over only one member, could do as he liked. (2) The Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in Bengal was to have a superior authority over the Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in the other Presidencies, and whenever he visited any of these Presidencies he was to replace the local Commander-in-Chief as members of the Governor's Council though the local Commander-in-Chief could also sit. (3) The Commander-in-Chief in the Central Council was to occupy a place only second to that of the Governor-General. But in the case of a vacancy pending a new appointment in the office of the Governor-General he could not succeed. This vacancy was required to be temporarily filled up by the senior of the other two members of the Council.

(4) The earlier experience of making new appointments from England to the Governor-General's Council having proved a bitter failure, it was now provided that henceforward these members would be appointed only from among the covenanted servants of the Company. (5) In the appointment of the Governor-General, the Directors were required to secure due approval of the Crown, but no such approval was necessary in the appointment of the members of the Governor-General's Council and in that of the Governors and their Councillors. The Crown was, however, empowered to recall a Governor-General or a Governor in case it so desired. (6) The resignation of any of these high officials was required to be submitted

in writing. This provision was necessary to obviate the possibility of the repetition of the trouble created at the time of Hasting's resignation in 1777.

(7) The Governor-General and Council were required not to declare war on a country power without the express permission and authority of the Court of Directors or at least of that of the Committee of Secrecy. The subordination of the Governor-General and Council was enforced for the reason, as it was declared, that "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominions in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and policy of this nation."

(8) Likewise the control of the Governor-General and Council in Bengal was strengthened on the Presidencies which were required to work under the former's supervision and direction in the revenue matters and in the matters of war, peace and treaties with the Indian powers. In the case of a sudden emergency or an imminent danger however, the Presidencies could enter into treaties which were subject to the ratification of the Governor-General and Council. (9) The Presidencies could also disobey the Governor-General and Council in case they had received different orders from the Directors of which the Governor-General was ignorant. In such an exigency, these orders had immediately to be sent to the Governor-General and Council who would then issue directions as they thought fit. (10) The Presidencies were also required to send copies of papers on all matters to the Centre. (11) It was provided generally that in all the military services under the rank of Commander-in-Chief and in all the civil services under that of Councillors, the promotion were to be made only by seniority except in special cases where the Directors were required to be informed. (12) All the possessions of the Company in India were, for the first time, termed as the British possessions.

The Presidencies The Government of the Presidencies (1) was to consist of a Governor and a Council. The membership of the latter was also fixed now at three. One of these members was required to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Company's forces in the respective Presidency. (2) The other two members here too were to be appointed from among the covenanted servants of the Company. (3) Both the Governor and the Councillor were to be appointed by the Directors, but the Governors, as already referred to, could be recalled and removed by the King.

(4) The Presidencies, as we have already alluded to, were completely subordinated to the Governor-General and Council. They had to send copies of papers on all matters. They could not make war or peace or enter into treaties without the consent of the Centre except in emergency or imminent danger. And in case of the matters

referred to them by the Directors too, they had to work under the directions of the Centre, (5) In case of a disobedience, the Governor of a Presidency was liable to be suspended.

Certain General Provisions. To check the activities of the English Nabobs, the Act provided that (1) if an officer of the Company demanded or received a present, his act would be declared an extortion. (2) An officer of the Company could be required on his return to England to declare on oath the fortunes he possessed. (3) If a servant of the Company was dismissed by a judicial sentence, he could not be restored to his office or be released from an internment by any authority of the Company. (4) No servant of the Company who had been absent from the service for five years, except on grounds of health, could be reappointed to his office without an approval of at least three-fourths of the Court of Directors. (5) Any bargain for receiving or giving of an office or for disobeying the Directors was to be misdemeanour. (6) For the purpose of trying the cases of extortion and other misdemeanours, a special court was to be set up each session. The court would consist of three judges, four peers and six members of the House of Commons. This was an important provision, but was unfortunately amended in 1786. (7) The Governor-General and Governors were given special powers to arrest a person within the European settlements or in any of the native States, suspected of being in an illicit correspondence with those in authority.

(8) Another provision was made by the Act whereby all the subjects of His Majesty, whether in the service of the Company or not, were brought under the jurisdiction of the courts in Great Britain and India for any crime committed in the territories of an Indian State.

A Critical Review. The Pitt's India Act was almost the same in its essentials as that of Fox. Both aimed at putting the control of the conduct of public affairs by the Company in the hands of the British Government. The Company's right to territorial possession was left undecided in the both. But the Pitt's India Act was an improvement over the Fox's Bill in its tactics. And moreover as Pitt himself observed, his Act aimed at permanency of a system while that of Fox aimed at the permanency of men. Pitt did not introduce any sweeping change in the Company's constitution, and it left the Indian patronage almost entirely in the Company's hands. Pitt's India Act in fact as Keith comments, "embodied essentially a compromise."¹

(i) *The Dual Government.* The most important feature of the Act was that it introduced a Dual Government for the Company in England. All the functions of the Company, political, administrative and commercial, were divided into two parts. The control of the purely

1. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

commercial functions was placed entirely in the hands of the Directors, while for the control of the Company's political functions the responsibility was handed over to the Board of Control. The Board represented the Crown, while Directors represented the Company. This constituted what is popularly known as Dual Government for the Company in London.

As obvious from the provisions of the Act, the intention of its framers was to establish a complete supremacy of the Board in the Company's political affairs. Dundas had declared that "without the whole powers of government, the Board of Control would be nugatory body". Hence the real effective government had to be placed into the Board's hands.

The Board was empowered to superintend, control and direct all the functions of the Company in its revenue, civil and military departments. The copies of the orders and despatches of the Directors before they were sent to India, had to be supplied to the Board for their concurrence. The procedure was, that a despatch to be sent to India was first discussed through private correspondence or verbally, between the respective Chairman of the Court and the Board. After this the despatch was drafted and together with the necessary documents, sent to the president of the Board. The procedure upto this stage was called "Previous Communication." When the despatch was received by the Chairman of the Board, he could either approve it or introduce certain amendments and changes as he felt necessary which sometimes changed it entirely out of shape, making it to "express a meaning very opposite of what was intended by the Court of Directors."¹

The Board could also, at its own initiative, require of the Directors to prepare an order or a despatch on a particular subject. If the Directors did not comply within 14 days, the Board could prepare it itself and send it to the Directors to be transmitted to India. The Board could send certain secret orders to the Secret Committee of the Directors and require of them to keep the matter from the rest of the members of the court. The Court of Proprietors was made almost completely impotent, standing nowhere between the Directors and the Board. If the Directors refused to act according to the directions of the Board, an appeal for a writ of mandamus could be carried to the Court of King's Bench.

If the Board was given no hand in the patronage of India, it was empowered to recall any of the principal servants of the Company, which was a weapon strong enough to make the Directors appoint only those persons whom the Board liked.

1. Punniiah, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Although no mention was made in the Act of a Minister for the Indian affairs, yet the presidents of the Board were also the members of the British Cabinet and, therefore, belonged to the party in power. This made a president of the Board an influential member of the Parliament and the Company could oppose neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament. The Directors, in other words, were completely enslaved to the Board, for they feared lest in case of opposing the president of the Board, his parliamentary influence should be used to strip them of their patronage.

The powers of the president of the Board were yet stronger in the foreign affairs of India, the power of the Directors in the matter being no better than those of a Mayor or an Alderman of a corporate town. Moreover, the Governor-General of India too preferred rather to work according to the instructions of the Board than according to those of the Directors. For the Board was the representative of the Crown and therefore in case of a class the victory was in most cases bound to go to it.

Still, it does not mean that the Board was all powerful and the Directors were reduced to a mere nonentity. There were two checks on the authority of the Board of Control : (i) The Directors had powerful allies in the Parliament. (ii) Joint responsibility of the Cabinet. The report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms (1918) rightly said that it could not be concluded "that the supremacy of the President of the Board of Control left the Directors with no real control. Their position was still a strong one; the right of initiative still rested ordinarily with them, they were still the main repository of knowledge and though the legal responsibility lay with the Government, they exercised to the last, a substantial influence on the details of administration."

All the original records concerning the affairs of India were in the possession of the Board which maintained a very large staff of permanent servants and had, therefore, better experience and better understanding of the problems. If for nothing else, at least due to this reason the Board and its opinions were bound to command due respect.

Nor should we overlook the fact that the Directors formed an essential channel of communication between the Government of India and the Board. All the despatches from India were addressed to the Directors and all the despatches and orders to India went through their hands. The Directors enjoyed the right to initiative. The Board was given no authority to correspond with India independently of the Court of Directors.

The powers of patronage were left in the hands of the Directors almost intact and the Board had no authority to attack these

powers directly, though it did assert its control in an indirect manner. The Governor-General, the members of the Council, the Governors and the other officers down to a clerk, all owed their appointment to the Directors who could recall them or dismiss them as they desired. The effectiveness of the Directors' power of patronage can be judged from the fact that between 1784 and 1833, almost fifty per cent of the Directors' proposals were completely accepted by the Board.

Moreover, the Board was interested mainly in the political and foreign affairs of India. In the day-to-day administration the Board being only a revising body, the "enormous influence necessarily rested with those through whose hands the mass of business passed."¹ Thus it is clear that both the bodies enjoyed considerable co-extensive powers. This constituted what is known as a Dual Government for the Company at Home.

Its Working. The dual system, as its working showed however, had many defects. The most important of these was the slackening of the interest of the British Parliament in the Indian affairs. The president of the Board being a representative of the majority in power, he had nothing to fear from the Parliament. Nor had he been required to lay an annual or periodical report on the Indian affairs before the Parliament. This made the President almost irresponsible.

The secrecy being the key note of the Company's affairs, little was known of the administrative problems of India outside the Board. The Parliament, hence, grew almost ignorant of the Board's activities, thereby making its president almost an autocrat within his sphere. According to Keith, the Board in fact "passed into oblivion as such,"² and no member of the opposition evinced any keen interest in its affairs.

The provisions of the Act, to a certain extent, were vague in explaining the respective powers of the Directors and the Board. Often the Board of Control claimed that its right to direction and supervision also implied an interference in appointments of the highest officers of the Company. The matter in this respect came to a head in the time of Wellesley, when the case being taken to the Court of Law, the Board was able to secure a victory over the Directors.

The powers of the Board to recall the Governor-General and Governors from India at their will brought about many clashes. In 1784 thus, the Directors appointed Holland to take charge of the Government of the Fort St. George. Dundas, the president of the

1. Keith, *op.*, *cit.*, p. 98.

2. *ibid*, p. 99.

Board, opposed this appointment. The insistence of the Directors was of no avail and Dundas frankly informed Holland that if he tried to take charge of his office, he would be recalled as soon as he set his foot on the Indian soil. The Directors thus were left with no option but to cancel the appointment and accept the nominee proposed by Dundas. Yet another clash occurred in 1806 when Lord Cornwallis died in India and Sir George Barlow, the senior councillor was permitted to succeed him temporarily. Incidentally just after this a change took place in the British Cabinet and Lord Minto assumed the office of the president of the Board of Control. In the beginning he agreed that Barlow be confirmed, but ten days later he reversed his views and asked the Directors to supersede Barlow by Earl of Lauderdale. The Directors naturally objected to it. But Lord Minto little caring for them, got Barlow recalled by a warrant under royal sign-manual.

The act, indeed gave an insatiable thirst to the Board for grasping and more powers in the valuable Indian appointments and in the more day-to-day administration of this country. The Directors laid down the policy and made the appointments, while the Board always interfered and tried to bog down the policy and recall the officers.

The procedure of finalising a despatch before it was transmitted to India, was most cumbersome. Lord Palmerston thus observed, that before a "despatch upon the most important matter could get out to India, it had to oscillate between Cannon Row and India House (the respective offices of the Board and the Directors). It was proposed by one party, altered by the other, altered again by the first party and sent back to the other." It naturally caused an inordinate delay resulting sometimes into very serious consequences.

Nor could the position of the Governor-General be very happy under these circumstances. He had to serve two masters. Being appointed by the Directors, he was liable to be recalled by the Board. When there was a clash between the two bodies, the working of the Governor-General was bound to become clogged and confused. Sometimes when the Governor-General required some immediate decision and the opinion of the authorities at Home could not easily be ascertained, he landed himself into serious trouble. Such an exigency "brought the career of more than one Governor-General to an inglorious end."

The two bodies had two different interests. The Board worked for the Crown while the Directors worked for the Company. Their interests clashed and sometimes the Board tried to secure an upper hand by conspiring with the Governor-General, which made the Directors to retaliate and to seek for yet more unscrupulous ways to assert their position and power. The net result of all this ways an increased inefficiency and sometimes a heavy loss to the Government of India. It was thus due to the hot-headed and autocratic directions of the

president that India was involved in many a costly, "unfruitful and aggressive" war much against the wishes of the Directors.

The most unfortunate feature of all this development was that the Board was developing an autocratic power while it was responsible to none. For the British had long since ceased taking an interest in the Indian affairs; and people of India and the Company were too weak to raise their head against the unscrupulousness of its president.

In fact the situation was so confusing that nobody could clearly understand as to where the final authority for the Government of India could be looked for. The Governor-General worked on the spot. The Directors had the initiative, while the Board had the powers of direction and superintendence. It was not unnatural that Disraeli was completely at a loss during the Parliamentary Debates of 1853 to point his finger towards the men who could be looked upon as the final controlling authority on the Indian affairs.

The years 1787-88 witnessed the development of a very interesting constitutional problem. An Act of 1781 had provided that against the practice hitherto obtaining for the royal forces to be sent in the public interest to India, the Company paying at the rate of Rs 2 lakhs a year for every regiment of one thousand men so sent. In 1787 thus, four royal regiments were sent to India and the Company was called upon to pay towards the expenses. The Company being unable to bear the burden, hesitated, which resulted into yet another Act being passed in that year whereby the Board was empowered to send out the troops and fix the number which could be charged on the Company. This Act invited a very interesting constitutional debate. It was pointed out that the Company having its own forces to perform the required functions in an efficient and cheaper way, it was improper for the Crown to impose its forces for which no proper provision had been secured by an annual vote of the Parliament.

Thus it is clear that the difficulties created by the Dual Government in London were sometimes considerably serious and told badly on the Indian affairs. Yet, however, to be fair to the framers of this Act, let us not forget that they were called upon to handle a very unique problem. The Company had two sets of powers in India, one political and the other commercial. While according to the English law the political powers could be held by the subjects of the Crown only in the Crown's name, the commercial powers and property could be held in one's own right. Obviously the Crown had to interfere and assert its right to supervise and control the political powers but these powers being badly intermingled with the commercial and property rights, the assertion of the Crown's right was bound to be proportionately vague and confused. Pitt had to

work between two lines, the State authority and the private property. But since a clear demarcation between the two was difficult to maintain, he had to leave many provisions of the Act, purposely vague.

In its net result, we cannot help appreciating Pitt's achievement that while handing over supreme authority to the State, he was able to maintain a due respect for the Company's Charters and its property rights. This had a salutary effect of silencing those who had been violently objecting against the assumption of territorial and sovereign powers by the private subjects of the Crown. In the end we may quote Pitt that the Act "afforded a vigorous system of control with less possibility of influence; secured the possession of the East to the public without confiscating the property of the Company and beneficially changed the nature of the defective Government without entrenching on the chartered rights of the man."

The Other Features. 1. Of the other features of the Act which constituted its merits one was that a vague supremacy of the Crown over the Company was replaced by a definite control through a Board of Commissioners representing the ruling party of England. The final authority to superintend and direct the civil and military authority of the Company was now vested in the hands of the president of the Board who was bound to be one of the most influential members of the British Parliament.

2. The powers of the Court of Proprietors were severely curtailed, which, in the words of Keith, "was a proper punishment for defying the Commoners in 1782."¹ They could not now interfere in any way in the decisions made by the Directors and approved by the Board. In a way they lost all powers for directing the Company's government in India.

3. The character of the Governor-General's office was also completely changed. In the light of the bitter experiences of Hastings, the Governor-General's position in his Council was strengthened by reducing the number of its members.

4. Nor was it possible for the presidencies to defy the directions and control of the Governor-General and Council. They were completely subordinated and Section 31 of the Act empowered the Governor-General and Council to suspend a presidency in case of disobedience to their orders. The office of the Governor-General in fact was clearly placed on the path of an unrestricted authority in India.

5. It was, however, clearly mentioned that "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominions in India, were measures

1. Keith, *op. cit.* p. 96.

repugnant to the wish, the policy and honour of this nation." The Directors had already been tired of expensive wars in India which had relegated the commercial activities of the Company to a secondary position. This declaration was expected to check the imperialistic tendencies of the Company's officers and to contain them in respect of their growing hunger for territories.

6. The Act also, took a welcome step to provide for the trial of the Englishmen committing offences in India. A special court was set up for the purpose in England, which was to consist of three judges, four peers and six Commoners.

7. A due provision was also made to check the extortionist activities of the Company's servants. They could not now receive or demand presents and their disobedience to the orders of the Directors would constitute a misdemeanour. Nor could they be reappointed to their offices without the approval of a three-fourths majority of the Court of Directors, in case of their absence from duty for more than five years except on grounds of health.

The provision for charging the salaries and expenses of the Board upto £16,000 on the revenue of India, however, was unfortunate. The members of the Board were responsible to the Parliament and, therefore, it was high-handedness on the part of the Parliament to refuse to pay for them from the British revenues.

Nor were the powers of the Governor-General in his Council made very much enviable. By reducing the membership of the Council from four to three, the hold of the Governor-General was no doubt strengthened, but still he had no right to override the majority. The matter in this connection came to a head in 1786 when Lord Cornwallis refused to accept the Governor-Generalship of India unless, in special cases, he had the right to overrule the decisions of his Council. The exigency of the matter being duly felt, an Act was passed in that year whereby Cornwallis was given what he demanded. The Act also empowered the offices of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief to be united in one person. It is thus rightly remarked ; "Pitt's India Act provided for a workable constitution for government in India and Cornwallis established a Constitutional Government of India." This concentration of power was compared by Burke with an introduction of arbitrary and despotic Government."¹ But the change was justified in view of the experiences of Hastings.

HASTINGS AND HIS COUNCIL

The Regulating Act of 1773 transformed the Governor of Bengal into the Governor-General of Bengal. He was to be assisted

1. *ibid.*, p. 99.

by a council of four members. One of these four, namely Barwell, was taken from the old council of Hastings; while the other three, namely General Clavering, Philip Francis and Colonel Monson, were selected by the government of Lord North in England. The new Councillors were required to help in recasting the Government of India's policy in accordance with the views of the Crown and the Parliament. The three Councillors sailed from England in April 1774, and landed in India at the Chandpal Ghat on 19 October 1774 where they were saluted by seventeen guns fired in their honour.

Trotter, the biographer of Hastings, has given a fairly long account of the relations of the hero of his book with these Councillors, and he sought to prove that all these new Councillors who came from England, were determined right from the day they were appointed to their posts, never to lose "a chance of wounding their President's pride ignoring his authority, or undoing his work."¹ Of these three, says Trotter, "Clavering, who was also appointed Commander-in-Chief, was honest, a hot-headed soldier, who had led the attack on Guadeloupe in 1759 and whose Parliamentary influence had raised him into favour with the King and Lord North." "The Hon. George Monson had fought in Indian campaigns on the coast and borne a prominent part in the conquest of Manila in 1762. He appears to have been a man of small intellect, arrogant, rash, self-willed, but easily led by those who paid him the needful deference," Trotter passes a similar judgement with regard to the character of Francis, and concludes, that although all the three were received "with all befitting courtesy and respect," they "made but a cold return to greetings which they were in no mood to construe in a fair and friendly spirit."¹

We do not know what qualification and achievements Trotter himself had, but on the one hand to say that Clavering was capable enough to win "Parliamentary influence" and "favour with the King and Lord North," and on the other hand to dismiss him contemptuously by saying that he was a "hot-headed soldier", and again counting the achievements of Monson which won him the appointment as a Councillor, and then calling him a man of "small intellect...easily led by those who paid him the needful deference," all these expose him as a mind which is extremely biased in favour of the hero of his own book, and as a writer who instead of judging the facts with a broader vision, brings an extremely narrow outlook to bear upon his facts. In the whole biography Trotter seems to have started with pre-conceived notions, proceeded with a bizarre fervour everywhere only to defend what he has declared his own.

Trotter's main object in his book seems to have been to praise Hastings in whatever he did, and to condemn everybody who said

1. Trotter, L.J., *Warren Hastings*, pp. 79-83.

something or did something against the Governor-General, as a heretic and a mischief maker. Burke, Sheridan, Fox, Pitt, North and others in the British Parliament who found some justification in the attitude of his Councillors against Hastings, have all been put in the dock of history and Trotter sits in judgment determined only to twist the facts to suit his convenience. This can scarcely be forgiven in a historian.

Be that as it may, we hold no brief for the Councillors on our part either. The story of the hostilities between Hastings and his Councillors is interesting. As the Councillors landed in India, "no troops were drawn out to greet them," and "Hastings received them at his private house instead on the Council-Chamber." Whatever defence Trotter may forward in favour of Hastings, his new Councillors were not prepared to forgive these lapses, and bitter differences developed in the very first meeting of the Council that Hastings conducted. As Hastings reviewed his past activities, the very first thing the new Councillors did was to condemn his Rohilla policy, and they asked him to produce all the correspondence that had passed between him and the British agent at Lucknow, which he refused to do. Of the four Councillors, it must be noted, Barwell always stood by Hastings, but the others joined against him, and decided by a majority vote that Middleton, the agent Hastings had appointed at Lucknow, should be recalled forthwith and Bristow be appointed in his place. Hastings' treaty with the Nawab of Oudh signed at Benares, was denounced, and the Wazir was asked to make immediate payment for the help he had received against the Rohillas.

It must not be forgotten that the new Councillors had been appointed with a declared purpose "of moulding the policy of the Indian government in accordance with the views of Parliament and the Crown," as Trotter himself writes.¹ They might have acted with a zeal which did not always fit in the circumstances, but that the policy already being pursued by Hastings was opposed generally in England, and the Councillors showed no exception, seems to be proved.

The Councillors did not like Hastings' policy of making Oudh a buffer state. And when Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab-Wazir died, the Councillors saw in it an opportunity to brush away all the existing British commitments in that state. The matter was referred to the Directors, who favoured continuing guarantees to Asaf-ud-Daula, the new Nawab, and it was only then that a new treaty was signed with him in 1775 under which the subsidy payable by the Nawab was raised and his jurisdiction over Chait Singh was transferred to the Company. Since all this was done only by the hostile majority, even if there were some merits in the new changes, they were overlooked by Hastings, and he opposed the decision. The bitterness

1. *ibid.*, p. 76.

became yet sharper when Hastings wrote back to the Home authorities to recall his opponents.

Another matter which led to sharp exchanges in the Council, was the case of Nand Kumar who blamed Hastings of having received bribes from Munni Begam, the widow of Mir Jafar, and Raza Khan whom the Governor-General acquitted after a trial. Nand Kumar wanted personally to appear before the Council to give evidence. Opponents of Hastings agreed to this, but before Nand Kumar came the Governor-General left his chair. The hostile majority voted Clavering to preside, heard Nand Kumar and declared Hastings guilty.

This encouraged many others who had some complaints against the Governor-General, and evidence began to pour in to blame him for his irregularities and corruption. The whole situation became extremely insulting, when Hastings lodged a charge of conspiracy in the Supreme Court against Nand Kumar. One Kamal-ud-din, a revenue farmer, appeared saying he had been compelled by Nand Kumar to bear false witness against the Governor-General. Munni Begam disowned her letter on the basis of which Hastings was charged of having accepted a bribe from her. The Chief Justice Impey and his colleagues found Nand Kumar guilty of forgery, and punished him to death. Impey had been a class-fellow of Hastings and his critics blamed him for having influenced the Court to get rid of an enemy. Nor were the charges against Nand Kumar supposed to be grave enough to earn him the penalty of death.

Opposition to Hastings still continued in the Council. They restored to the Nawab in Bengal, the judicial powers which Hastings earlier had taken away. The revenue settlement made in 1772 was criticised, and the permanent part of the scheme of 1774 with regard to the collection of land revenue was put into cold storage.

When the Bombay authorities signed the treaty of Surat with Raghoba, for once at least, the Governor-General and his Council joined to criticise their policy. Later on, however, Hastings changed as he saw some reason in what Bombay did, but the hostile majority stuck to their guns, and concluded peace with the Marathas at Purandhar which was liked neither by Hastings nor Bombay. The war had to be continued.

Hastings was, however, lucky. Monson died in September, 1776, giving Hastings an effective casting-vote with which he immediately withdrew Bristow and reappointed Middleton at Lucknow. The old policy towards Oudh was resumed, and the judicial and revenue changes began to be introduced as earlier planned.

Hastings' position in England, however, weakened. North

wanted Hastings to be recalled and Clavering to be appointed in his place. In May 1776 the Directors also agreed to the proposal, by a majority of one vote. Court of Proprietors, however, defied both Lord North and the Directors and Hastings could not be recalled. In desperation, Hastings himself offered to resign, and in June 1777 it was learnt that the offer had been accepted, and Clavering appointed to succeed him. Before, however, Hastings actually laid down his office, Clavering "summoned a Council...in his own name, took the oath as Governor-General, called on Hastings to yield up the keys of the Fort and Treasuries, and commanded the troops in Fort William and the neighbouring stations to obey no orders except his own." Hastings felt insulted, promptly withdrew his offer to resign, and issued counter-orders to the army and the civil officers not to recognise Clavering. He also made an appeal to the Supreme Court, which decided in his favour and his enemy was thus vanquished.

Shortly after, Clavering fell ill, and on 29 August 1777 he died, giving much relief to the Governor-General who had now to deal with the opposition only of Francis. Hastings struck a compromise with the latter under which he conceded some of his demands in return for a promise of his support in the Council. The compromise, however, failed and the quarrel between the two descended to a duel in which an exchange of shots followed. Francis was wounded by a bullet, and a few months after this he sailed away to England. Hastings was thus left free to handle the Maratha war, which had started once again, and other matters as he wished.

In the unhappy story of hostilities between the Governor-General and his Council, one needs try to find out the moral grounds for the position neither of Hastings nor his opponents. We already had sufficient to say about his principles and policy in the preceding pages, and will have an opportunity to say a few words once again when he returns to England. But about his opponents, we might take an opportunity to say that though there must have been merits in the views and policy on the state-matters they wanted to adopt, their personal behaviour left much to be desired and it is difficult to say who provoked whom.

SUPREME COUNCIL AND THE SUPREME COURT

Hastings also had to face some troubles at the hands of the Supreme Court of Judicature set up by the Regulating Act. The provisions with regard to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court were vague. For instance, all the persons employed by the Company directly or indirectly, were placed under the Court's jurisdiction, and the Court interpreted it to mean that the zamindars who collected revenues from the ryots being in a way the servants of the state were answerable to it for what they did. This was, however, denied by the Governor-General and Council, but the Supreme Court paid no heed to their views. It started hearing appeals against the decisions

of the revenue courts, with the result that the revenue machinery began to suffer from delay in the execution of their policy, and many other troubles followed.

Impey, the Chief-Justice of the Supreme Court had been a class-fellow of Hastings, and the two tried to sort out their differences, but once in the absence of the Chief Justice from Calcutta Justice Hyde precipitated the matter by issuing the writ of Habeas Corpus against the Raja of Kosijora, the crying of which was avoided by the defendant who concealed himself. The Governor-General consulting the Advocate-General, asked the Raja not to submit to the court's jurisdiction and issued a general notification to the effect that the zamindars were beyond the court's jurisdiction. This incensed the Court under whose orders a sheriff's officer with a few sailors sequestered the Raja's property and packed away his idol as if it were an ordinary article of domestic use. The Governor-General and his Council retaliated by ordering a party of sepoy's to escort the miscreants back to Calcutta and took measures to protect other zamindars against the orders of the court. The court issued summonses in the name of the Supreme Council itself which the latter did not obey.

In October 1780 Hastings met Impey and asked him to accept the office of the President of the Sadar Dwan Adalat in addition to his own post, against a fixed annual payment. The Chief Justice agreed and the dispute was disposed of. For this both Impey and Hastings were later on blamed as having given and accepted a bribe.

IMPEACHMENT AND ESTIMATE

Returning from India Hastings reached England on 13 June 1785 where he was greeted by his friends and admirers. Shortly after, however, Burke declared his intention to bring some charges against the conduct of Hastings in India. Burke was said to have been inspired and helped by Philip Francis the enemy of Hastings, who had all along been preparing to take his revenge on him. The first charge brought against Hastings in the Commons was against his policy of extirpating the innocent and helpless Ronillas. The charge was, however, defeated. The second charge against his 'severity' towards Chait Singh was carried by a majority of 39 votes. The third charge regarding the Begums of Oudh was also carried and Hastings was held guilty.

It was now decided to impeach him in the court of the House of Lords where twenty charges were forwarded against Hastings. The trial started on 12 February 1788 and took about seven years to end. Cowper, an old school friend of Hastings, who witnessed a part of the trial, wrote,

Hastings ! I know thee young, and of a mind,
while young, humane, conversable and kind;

Nor can I well believe thee—gentle *then*

Now grown villain, and the worst of men.¹

Lord Cornwallis who had retired from India by then, gave evidence in his favour. He secured support from some other quarters as well, with the result that he ultimately won.

The victory, however, cost Hastings heavily. Out of about £80,000 that he had been able to make in India, he spent more than £70,000 on his defence. He appealed to the Government and the Company for a pension. The former turned a deaf ear, but the latter came to his rescue by fixing £4,000 per annum on him. His efforts that the pension should continue to his wife after his death failed, yet so long as he lived he spent his days in happiness. He died on 22 August 1818, at the ripe age of about 86.

The achievements of Hastings in India were great. He was the first Governor-General of Bengal, and in every sphere of administration and foreign policy, it was he who laid the foundations on which later on, the superstructure of the British Empire in India was raised.

We may conclude our account of him with the words of Viscount Mersey: "Hastings was a scholar and somewhat of a dreamer who set no great value on money, but he was a man of exalted aims and of dogged tenacity and courage. Half of his adult life was spent in India in the centre of affairs of stress and war, and for ten years he was the effective ruler of all the British possessions here. In some ways his code of conduct was lax, but he had a definite policy both in war and peace. He was determined to force his European and native opponents to yield and his English subordinates to be honest, and in both aims he succeeded to a large extent. He it was who really founded the British system of administration and finance in the Indian Empire."²

1. Edward Gilliat, *op. cit.*, p 63.

2. Mersey, *op. cit.*, p. 20

Haidar Ali and the First Two Anglo-Mysore Wars

Born at Budikote in 1722, Haidar Ali was the son of Fateh Muhammad, a petty jagirdar and military officer who was killed in a fight in 1728, leaving behind Haidar (who was then only 6), his elder brother Shahbaz and their widowed mother to be persecuted at the hands of Abbas Quli, a son of Nawab Dargah Quli Khan of Sirsa. Haidar Sahib, a nephew of Fateh Muhammad, who was a military officer of the Mysore government helped Shahbaz to get a service in the Mysore army just when his family was almost destitute, and thus helped it get a footing. By this time, however, about ten years had lapsed since the death of his father, and Haidar grew up into a completely illiterate young man who, like his brother, entered into military service of Mysore and started his career.

Haidar had the qualities of a daring nature and was not only swift but also intellectually alert ; and was capable of taking opportunities as they offered themselves. The ruling prince of Mysore, Chikka Krishnaraja, being a nincompoop, the Mysore government at the time was in the hands of two brothers, Devraj and Nanjaraj who usurped all power, but could not save the state from the vortex of rivalry between the Marathas and the Nizam. Haidar Ali's opportunity came in 1750 when Nasir Jang, whom the Mysore government supported in the war of succession after the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk, the Nizam, was suddenly murdered. At the head of about 600 men, Haidar was then in attendance on Nasir Jang, together with the other troops of Mysore. He benefited from the confusion suddenly created, and dispossessed the rebels of about three-fourths of the wealth of the murdered prince that they were carrying away, and in this way suddenly became rich. With the help of this wealth, he slowly climbed into power and not only displaced the usurpers, but also, by force, fraud or cajolery, won the confidence of the army, as well as of the ruler himself. *He made several*

conquests in the name of the Mysore king, but till the end of his career he never thought of appropriating the office of king to himself.

THE FIRST MYSORE WAR 1767-69

The Circumstances

The circumstances leading to the First Mysore War make an interesting reading. By 1760 Haidar Ali had almost consolidated his authority in Mysore, in which he had been supported by the French, with the result that due to the Seven Years' War in Europe when hostilities broke out between the English and the French in the Deccan, Lally requested Haidar to help him with some troops to bring provisions to Pondichery which was under siege. Haidar Ali supplied them 4,000 horse for the purpose, but before he could make any impact on the Anglo-French hostilities, his opponents in Mysore got some help from the Marathas and suddenly attacked him obliging him to flee to Bangalore. This happened on 12 August 1760 and it was not before May 1761 that he recovered his position. By then the French cause was doomed beyond recovery.

The French influence in the court of Haidar Ali continued to increase. "Haidar had the reputation of being closely united to the French and he is said to have given protection and gathered the scattered remnants of the French nation in India."¹

The other causes that developed bitterness between Haidar and the British were, the shelter that the former gave to Mahpluz Khan, the elder brother and a staunch enemy of Muhammad Ali who was under British protection and with whom, also, Haidar had some territorial disputes concerning the districts of Karur, Uttamapalayam, Virupakshi etc. He also gave service to Raja Sahib, a son of Chanda Sahib which was bound to be disliked by the British. On the other hand the British cantoned their troops at Vellore which was a constant source of irritation to Haidar.

Early in 1766 Haidar Ali attacked the Malabar country where some powers allied to the British appealed to them for help. The matter was at the time discussed between the governments of Bombay and Madras, and although they did not decide on any immediate action with regard to it, they did grow apprehensive with regard to Haidar's designs.

Before however, the hostilities between the two powers came to the open, Haidar Ali who had a due regard for the British courage and resourcefulness, offered to have a friendly alliance with them which he believed would be of mutual help in their respective territorial ambitions. He thus wrote to his representative in 1766 : "I

1. Sinha, N.K., *Haidar Ali*, p. 62.

have got a large force. The English have the same. If both be united, the Mog illians and the Marathas can do nothing. If there be an occasion on that side my troops will go to their assistance and if on my side their troops will come to my assistance. Mention this to the Governor and if he is of the same opinion and if the gentlemen of the Council agree thereto the settling. It cannot be managed by a correspondence of letters for which reason you should bring a proper gentlemen and a letter under the seal of the seven Councillors."¹ The mutual faith was, however, lacking and the proposed friendship never materialised.

In the meanwhile, there were rumours that Haidar Ali was trying to enter into an alliance with Nizam Ali to march into Carnatic. This incensed the British and they decided to steal a march on him by winning Nizam Ali over to their side. In this they were a success and on 12 November 1766 a treaty was signed between them and the Nizam which sprung a great surprise on Haidar who began to apprehend a concerted attack which actually did take place soon after. Madhav Rao was already an ally of the Nizam and was busy plundering some of the Mysore territories.

Haidar Ali, however, did not lose heart. He himself was a past master in diplomacy. He knew that the friendship among the three powers against him was only a marriage of convenience which could be broken as easily as it had taken place. He sent some presents to the Nizam and approached him through some mutual friends, with the result that the latter was soon detached from the British. He was also able to conclude a separate treaty with Madhav Rao who now withdrew from his territories after receiving an amount of Rs. 35 lakhs.

The British thus were isolated and their position became ridiculous. Not only were they weakened by the desertion of their faithless allies, but also their enemy Haidar became more formidable when the Nizam combined with him and they delivered an attack on the territories of the Nawab of Arcot.

The War

As Haidar and the Nizam entered the Carnatic, they devastated its territories far and wide. The news service of the British being weak, they could not regularly get information with regard to the enemy's movements till they suddenly heard that Kaveripatnam was besieged. Colonel Smith, the senior most army officer at Madras at the time had only a small number of troops under his command. Therefore, instead of going to the relief of Kaveripatnam, he marched to Trinomali where he hoped Wood's division from Trichinopoly

1. *Military Consultations*, vol. 24, 1766, p. 213, quoted by Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

would join. Haidar learning of the movements of Smith marched after him determined to cut his small army to pieces at Changama, on the way, where a severe battle took place in which the British suffered 20 killed and 150 wounded, while Haidar and Nizam paid with 1500 killed or wounded. In its final results, however, the battle remained indecisive, and Smith continued his march, though constantly harassed by the enemy from a distance.

As planned, Wood who had not yet tasted a fight with the confederates, joined Smith at Trinomali and Haidar failed to prevent a junction. Here the British began to wait for an opportunity to grapple with the opponents at close quarters. The opportunity was foolishly given by the confederate army on the 26 September 1767 when it advanced against the British camp. There was a hill between the two armies which was in the British possession. The British army moved out of their encampment, the Mysoreans thinking that they were retreating. But they were surprised when they moved by one side of the hill and suddenly came face to face with the British who were advancing towards them. The British, however, could not take much advantage of their superior position because of the lack of cavalry and Haidar rode off without suffering a heavy loss. After this the Nizam deserted Haidar. The rainy season having set in, the British retired to their cantonments, as Haidar also did.

Early in November 1767, the hostilities were resumed when Haidar captured Tirupattur, Venyambadi and Ambur. All these places, however, were soon recovered by the British and Haidar Ali marched away to Bangalore. In the meanwhile the Nizam who had separated from Haidar Ali, was speculating on the outcome of his early success, but when the British dislodged Mysoreans from one place after another, he turned towards them and finally signed a treaty with the Madras government on 22 March 1768, one of the articles of which read : "Asaf Jah recognises Haidar Naik as a rebel and usurper and as such divests him of and revokes from him all sanads, power and distinctions conferred by him or any other suba of the Deccan."

Soon after signing the treaty with the Nizam, the British entered into an offensive. The Bombay government sent its forces by sea and by land and started capturing Haidar Ali's territories on the Malabar coast. Soon Mangalore fell before them and they also captured a major part of Haidar's fleet. Tipu, Haidar's son, moved to recover Mangalore, and Haidar also leaving behind Makhdum Saheb at Bangalore, marched from the eastern to the western part of the peninsula like a hurricane. Mangalore was recovered, and the British were forced to retreat in panic on 11 May, out into the sea.

In the meanwhile, preparatory to the siege of Bangalore, British deciding to cut off supplies from the south, Wood marched thither

and occupied several places such as Salem, Atur, Namakkal, Satyamangalam and Coimbatore. Colonel Campbell occupied Venkatagiri and Mulbagal.

On 20 June 1768, the main British army under Smith marched from Krishnagiri. Wood having subjugated the south marched to join him whereafter both would move towards Bangalore. Haidar who had arrived at Bangalore, moved out to prevent the junction, but failed. The British army now assembled at Kolar and efforts began to be made to prevent Haidar from returning to Bangalore. At this juncture Haidar wrote to Smith offering to conclude peace, but the Madras government forwarded some strict conditions such as the reimbursement of the whole expenditure of war which Haidar could not accept, and he now entered the war with courage born out of desperation, and fell on Mulbagal which he captured. "Rarely have rapacity and extortion met with a prompter punishment," writes Malleison. "Driven to bay, the wild and untutored genius asserted itself. From the recovery of Mulbagal began the series of successes ending in the triumph of Haidar Ali."¹ Wood marched to recover Mulbagal, and a battle followed in which Haidar fought with determination and foiled the British design, though he lost 1,000 of his men as against 250 of the British, killed or wounded.

The British forces withdrew to Kolar from where Smith was recalled and the command was left in the hands of Wood in whom they had greater faith. But this decision of the Madras government proved unfortunate. Haidar inflicted severe losses on Wood at Hosur, and then at Arlier. Madras learnt its lesson, recalled Wood and appointed Smith once again to take charge. But before Smith could resume his duties in January 1769, Haidar recovered every fort in the southern country that Wood had occupied, and in addition occupied Karur.

Haidar was at Trinomali when Smith commenced his march after him. But the former deluded him at one station after another, and the latter lost track till suddenly Haidar was found between Madras and Smith's forces, in a position from where he could dictate his terms on the presidency.

Treaty

The treaty was concluded on 4 April 1769 under which (1) the two sides mutually restored their conquered territories, with the exception of Karur and its adjoining areas which remained with Haidar. (2) If either of the two parties was attacked by its enemies, the other was to come to its support; and (3) the stores at Kolar were surrendered to Haidar in lieu of his ships captured by Bombay.

1. Malleison, *The Decisive Battle of India*, pp. 220-221.

Among the causes that were responsible for the failure of the British, one was the dishonesty and overbearing attitude of the Madras Council. It was dishonest, for it forcibly took away oxen on hire, reported them dead after some time, and charged the full price on the Company's accounts. This alienated the people who would not part with their beasts. Consequently, all through the war the army complained of insufficient supplies, and at least on one occasion Smith threatened to resign on this account.

The overbearing attitude of the Council was exhibited in the impossible demands that it forwarded to Haidar when earlier he offered to conclude peace. It failed to seize an opportunity which did not come its way again.

Constituted of the civilians whose only aim in life seemed to make legal and illegal gains and amass wealth, the Council often interfered in military matters where it should have left everything to the superior army officers who worked in the field. Its obnoxious interference in the appointments of the field deputies, for instance, invited the protest of Smith who was removed from the command as a consequence.

Another reason resulting in Haidar's success was his superiority in the cavalry which gave him mobility in the battle-field that the British envied. Haidar made full use of this superiority and gave swift blows to the British which paralysed their defences. Haidar's personal intrepidity, firmness and keen intellectual grasp of the whole business of war also deserves an appreciation. The swiftness with which he moved and interposed himself between Smith's forces and Madras proved in him a seasoned general. Nor should one fail to remember the European training and discipline that he secured for his men by employing French officers in his army. If the Indians fighting for the British could win them laurels, why could not they fighting under him do the same. Haidar understood the reality and tried to defeat the British by their own methods. The poor news service of the enemy also came to his help, but for which he could not have been able to steal a march on Smith and dictate his terms.

Be that as it may, the *Directors* were stunned as a result of the British failure, and significantly commented while condemning the Governor of Madras: "The several powers of India, whose dread of our name and arm had contributed, in a great measure, to our prosperity and security, have seen terms of peace dictated to our Governor of Fort St. George, by a country power, at the gates of Madras."

"Haidar is said to have ordered a caricature to be made, representing the Governor and his Council kneeling before him. Haidar was shown holding Duple by the nose depicted as an elephant's trunk,

pouring guineas and pagodas. Smith also was in this picture, holding the treaty in his hand and breaking the sword in two."¹

THE SECOND MYSORE WAR UNDER WARREN HASTINGS 1780-84

The First Mysore War ended by the treaty of 1769 and Haidar Ali had hoped that peace thus established with the British would last. But this was not to be. The causes for friction began to appear immediately after 1769, and in 1780 started the Second Mysore War which had not yet ended when Haidar himself died.

The second article of the treaty of 1769 had laid down that in case "either of the contracting parties shall be attacked they shall from their respective countries, mutually assist each other to drive the enemy out." Haidar Ali had naturally hoped that the British would remain faithful to this provision, and when in 1770 he was attacked by the Marathas he requested their help. The English, however, temporised till he was completely defeated in 1771 and in June 1772 accepted the treaty dictated to him by the Marathas.

Haidar Ali was disillusioned, but still hoped the British would come round and in 1773 renewed his efforts to procure their friendship and assistance. The revenue and resources of the Carnatic, however, being with the Nawab of that place, he (Nawab) rather insisted on the British joining the Nizam and the Marathas to bring about Haidar's ruin. The evil influence that the Nawab of Arcot exercised over the British further alienated Haidar who now "abandoned all hopes of contracting a firm alliance with the English, and, although he maintained a semblance of friendship for a time, he felt that his own security necessitated his seeking support elsewhere."²

In 1770 Haidar had signed a treaty with Bombay under which the British established a factory at Onore and got the exclusive right to purchase sandal wood and pepper on the Malabar coast, in return for which they would supply war material to him when needed. During his war with the Marathas, Haidar Ali repeatedly requested for the supply of the military stores, but the Bombay authorities failed to fulfil the terms of the treaty which compelled him to turn to the French for help.

Another event which precipitated the Second Mysore War was the British expedition to Mahe in March 1779 which lay on the Malabar coast over which Haidar ruled, though the port itself was a possession of the French. Haidar Ali was interested in Mahe because he imported his war material and other such requirements from Europe, through this port, and therefore after the outbreak of

1. Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 94.

2. Bowring, Lewin B, *Haidar and Tipu Sultan*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 83-84.

hostilities between the English and the French in Europe, when the former after occupying Pondicherry in 1779 turned to it he requested them to desist from the action. Later on when in opposition to his wishes the British attacked Mahe, Haidar helped the French to defend it, and when it fell, his flag was flying on the port

Basalat Jang, a brother of the Nizam enjoyed a jagir which included Guntur, a territory that was to go to the British after the death of Basalat. as according to an agreement signed with the Nizam. Basalat Jang had certain contacts with the French which the British disliked, and persuaded him to farm out Guntur to them for life and dismiss the French in his service, to which he agreed and requested the British to send their troops to occupy that territory and to supplant the French troops in his court. The passage to Guntur, however, lay through the territories of Haidar and the Nizam and without seeking the permission of either and in the face of the opposition of both, the British sent their troops to secure their purpose. This, besides increasing the bitterness of Haidar, also alienated the Nizam.

In the meanwhile, the British having taken up the cause of Raghoba for the office of Peshwa at Poona after the treaty of Surat signed in 1775, the Anglo-Maratha War commenced which made the Marathas anxious to secure the help of Haidar Ali against the British. When Haidar lost all his hopes for a dependable alliance with the British, he was naturally happy at this chance and in 1780 signed an agreement under which he secured great territorial advantages from the Marathas in return for his support to their cause. After this agreement the Nizam was also approached who was already resentful of the British on the episode of Guntur which, to his bitterness, after its occupation by the British had been let out to the Nawab of Arcot. A triple alliance was thus concluded and a plan was drawn up for a common action against the British

Under the plan the Nizam was to invade the Sirkars, the Marathas would march on Berar, the northern and the central India, while Haidar would subjugate Madras and the southern India. The French aid was also there, and thus the coalition organised against the British looked very formidable, though defections started right from the time the confederacy materialised. The Nizam was detached by Hastings through the restoration of Guntur, and by some presents sent to him, though finally, he did not join the British to fight against Haidar.

The War

Haidar Ali was determined to teach the British a lesson. He collected a huge army, about 83,000 strong, at Bangalore. Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, warned the British but the British intelligence was weak, and they took no action till it was reported that Haidar was burning villages only about nine miles away from Madras.

Haidar Ali had set out from Seringapatam on 28 May, 1780, and after collecting his men at Bangalore he attacked one place after another and captured Porto Novo, Conjeeveram, Trinomali Chetput, Arni, etc., and on 20 August he was before Arcot preparing to besiege it. It was at this stage only that Munro appeared and compelled him to raise the siege. By this time, however, much had been lost, and the initiative lay with Haidar. It was decided that Baillie should march to Conjeeveram where Munro would meet him and then they would offer the enemy a battle. The former reached Vengal from where he marched to Perambaukam on his way to Conjeeveram. But on 6 September he was attacked at Perambaukam by Tipu whom he was able to beat off. Munro who was only about 15 miles from there, instead of marching to join Baillie where he was, he sent him a reinforcement under Fletcher and himself remained behind to protect Conjeeveram. This was an unfortunate decision. Baillie joined by Fletcher, had now about four thousand sepoys with whom he commenced his march again, but was attacked from all sides with the result that his troops lost all formation. He prepared to surrender and waved a white handkerchief, but seeing that fire from his side had not yet completely stopped, Haidar's troops pushed ahead. Fletcher was killed. Baillie, a wounded man, was taken prisoner, while within four hours for which the battle lasted, his army almost ceased to exist.

Haidar, however, for reasons best known to him, did not march after Munro who quietly retreated and reached Madras safely. Had the Mysoreans at this time marched to Madras, they might have taken it. But they lost the opportunity.

The news of the disaster reached Calcutta. "It was a fortunate thing", writes Bowring, "that British interests in India had at this time been confided to Warren Hastings, and that his master spirit controlled their destiny."¹ He picked up nearly sixty-years old Sir Eyre Coote who had to his credit a high reputation, and sent him to Madras with all the men and money that he could collect and with orders suspending the Governor of Madras.

In the meanwhile, Haidar renewed the siege of Arcot which capitulated on 3 November. By the middle of March, 1781 several other important places fell before Haidar, and he now besieged Tiagur. Coote reorganising the forces which numbered 8,000 horse and the same number foot, together with 62 pieces of cannon, took the field, but was almost confined to Cuddalore, for he had to remain on the coast to receive his supplies. Occasionally, however, he moved out. On 16 June thus he marched on Chidambaran, but had to retreat to Porto Novo after suffering some losses. He was preparing to march ahead again, when Haidar suddenly placed himself between Porto Novo and Cuddalore and Coote had to give him an immediate battle

1. Bowring Lewin, B., *op. cit.*, p. 93.

lest he should fortify his position and completely cut him off from the base. The battle lasted for about four hours again, in which the British suffered less than 500 killed or wounded, while Haidar lost more than 3,000 and retreated. This victory gave a new turn to the war, and the British prestige was restored.

Haidar, however, was not yet completely vanquished. He retreated and was joined at Arcot by Tipu who had raised the siege of Wandiwash as the British approached it. In the meanwhile, the Porto Novo victory and the retreat of Haidar gave Coote some freedom of movement. Shortly after he was joined by Pearse, and though he was yet very much short of provisions and transport, he now determined to give Haidar a defeat in the field and get Carnatic evacuated. The enemy gave him a chance in the plains of Ticollam where a battle inflicted a loss of 2,000 men on Haidar, while Coote lost only 420. Due to the shortage of provisions, however, Coote failed to take full advantage of the victory, and withdrawing to Madras he resigned in protest. He was, however, persuaded to continue, and take on Haidar suddenly and unawares at Sholinghur on 27 September 1781, where one more defeat shattered Haidar's prestige and his supporters began to desert.

The war, however, still dragged on. The British were strong at sea, and so long as that was so, no stronghold of the British such as that of Madras could be taken. Efforts of Haidar against them were, therefore, only to wear them out. An action between the two sides took place at the Veracundalore pass which was again inconclusive. At Annagudi, Braithwaite with his 2,500 foot and 1,300 horse was surrounded by Tipu who destroyed a large number of the enemy and took Braithwaite himself a prisoner. This was a great blow to the British, yet it was not capable of destroying their power, and Haidar now grew rather weary of war. He saw a ray of hope when a powerful French fleet under M. de Suffren appeared early in 1782, off the Coromandel coast. Some naval actions followed between the British and the French, but they all remained inconclusive, just as the battle on land fought at Arni on 2 June 1782 was.

In the meanwhile, the Marathas signed peace with the British at Salbai on 17 May. The British were now free to deal with Haidar more effectively. But the war was still going on when Haidar died in December 1782. Tipu, who succeeded Haidar, continued the hostilities, but in 1783 when the British concluded peace with the French in Europe and the latter also withdrew their support, Tipu was left alone, though his arrogance in no way lessened. It was in these circumstances that both the sides decided to conclude peace and the Treaty of Mangalore was signed in 1784 by the Madras authorities on behalf of the British. The terms of the treaty were not liked by Hastings who saw in them the humiliation of the British.

Under this treaty Tipu agreed to evacuate Carnatic, while the British were to vacate all the Mysore territories occupied during the war. The British demand for exclusive trade rights in Mysore were rejected, and thus peace was restored.

Before closing this chapter, a few words regarding the general character of Haidar seem necessary. Speaking of his military qualities writes, Bowring ; "Haidar was a born soldier, an excellent rider, and skilful alike with his sword and his gun. Trained by early habits to active exertion, he could undergo great fatigue without suffering from it, and when at the head of his troops, he was reckless of personal danger, thus stimulating the courage of his followers."¹ The courage, determination and resourcefulness that the British found in Haidar in their military campaigns against him, was something rare that they had come across in this country earlier. It was unfortunate that Haidar had no strong navy to support him in the naval warfare without which it was impossible to defeat the British completely. His allies the French, the Nizam and the Marathas, were all opportunists who could be relied upon only for intrigues and selfishness, qualities which Haidar himself possessed in an ample measure. "Perhaps his most remarkable characteristic was the celerity with which he made forced marches on various occasions, always with a successful result, feats which could only have been performed by a man who was both hardy and daring."²

As an administrator, says N.K. Sinha, "Haidar was an all powerful autocrat. But he was not an innovating ruler. He generally followed the established practices as also the local customs and laws of each region under his sway."³ He himself worked hard resting only for six hours and he knew how to get efficient work from those who worked under him. The estimated total revenue of Haidar was about two crore thirty-seven lakh rupees per annum which he was always planning to enhance. But the major part of it was spent only on military activities, while for the welfare of the people he had neither the time, nor money.

Haidar was condemned by his enemies as a usurper of power, but it goes to his credit that the Hindu dynasty which previously ruled Mysore, still continued at the head of the government, though only in name. Haidar knew that he could not peacefully rule till he conciliated his Hindu subjects, and exhibited his remarkable religious toleration by continuing the images of Shiva, the Hindu god and his consort Parvati, on one side of the coin that he struck. This was in contrast to the intolerant bigotry of his son Tipu who revived the

1. Bowring, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

2. *ibid*, pp. 107-108.

3. Sinha, *Haidar Ali*, p. 233.

old practice of religious persecutions establishing terror in the territories he ruled. Often when Haidar set out on a military expedition, Brahmins decided for him an auspicious date, and though Muslims predominated in his army for obvious reasons, his best civil servants came only from among the Hindus.

Gleig writes : "The Mysore government is the most simple and despotic monarchy in the world, in which every department, civil and military, possesses the regularity and system communicated to it by the genius of Haidar and in which all pretensions derived from high birth being discouraged, all independent thieves and zamindars being subjugated or extirpated, justice severely and impartially administered, a numerous and well-disciplined army kept up and almost every department of trust of consequence conferred on men raised from obscurity, gives the government a vigour hitherto unexampled in India."¹

1. Gleig, G.R., *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, i, pp. 84-85. Also see Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

Marquess Cornwallis 1786-1793

Born on 31 December 1738 in Governor Square, London, in a family of Irish origin, 2nd Earl and 1st Marquess Charles Cornwallis was the eldest son of 5th Lord and 1st Earl Charles. His mother Elizabeth was the daughter of 2nd Viscount Townshend. Cornwallis was educated at Eton, and being commissioned as ensign in 1st Guards in 1756, he got his training at the Military Academy at Turin, became a M.P. in 1759 and a member of the House of Lords in 1762 when he succeeded his father as 2nd Earl. He was married in 1768 to Jemina, a daughter of Colonel James Jones and worked in several important posts till 1776 when he became major-general. He fought in America where he got distinction in several actions till he had to capitulate at Yorktown in October 1781. Pitt, however, had high regards for him, and sent him in 1785 to Silesia in order to meet Frederick the Great on a mission, and shortly after persuaded him to accept the office of the Governor-General of Bengal.

Before his arrival in India, the preliminary lines on which the administrative structure of this country was to evolve had almost all been drawn up by Warren Hastings. He brought certain broad instructions from the Directors on how to remove certain existing faults in the system and how to evolve it a step further. Of the different reforms he introduced, one was the introduction of the permanent system of land revenue in Bengal.

SYSTEM OF LAND REVENUE IN BENGAL

Conditions when Cornwallis Arrived

Warren Hastings retired from India on 9 February 1785 and it was not before September 1786 that Cornwallis took charge in Bengal. In the intervening period Macpherson acted as the Governor-General and during his time it was decided to send back the Collectors once again to districts which were reorganised and reduced only to thirty-five. This amounted to decentralisation and going back to the old position of 1772-73,

which the Directors themselves approved in a despatch of September 1785. The district Collectors thus appointed were not only to collect revenues but also to make a settlement.

The Committee of Revenue of four members set up in 1781 was reconstituted and named Board of Revenue to be presided over by a member of the Governor-General's Council who was to be its fifth member. And in July 1786, a new post of Chief Sheristadar was created to collect revenue records and information from the Qanungos and break their monopoly in this regard.

The zamindars, where they had not been replaced in 1772 when land was farmed out for five years to the highest bidders, continued in an anomalous position in which though originally only revenue farmers, now they claimed proprietary rights on land and wanted compensation where they were dispossessed of their existing position. They, as we have already discussed in the preceding chapter, occupied a hereditary position, collected revenue from the ryots, kept one-tenth of it to themselves and paid nine-tenths to the state. In the time of Warren Hastings, Francis had advocated a permanent settlement with the zamindars to bring about a stability in the system while the Governor-General supported by Barwell wanted to settle them only for a life or two. When the five-year settlement came to end in 1777, the Directors decided in favour of a yearly settlement till a permanent solution was arrived at. The discussion in the meanwhile continued.

By 1780 England was full of the adherents of the views of Francis who himself went back in that year and issued several revenue pamphlets in this connection. The treatment of Chait Singh at the hands of Hastings resulted in the revolt of the zamindars of Bihar, and in England the opinion was maturing that they should be placated and converted into a loyal class of supporters of the British rule. Pitt's India Act was passed in 1784 which advocated permanent settlement and expressed a bias in favour of the zamindars, but with regard to which no step had been taken so far.

The condition of the ryots continued to be as pitiable as ever. They had friends neither among the Indian officials nor those of the Company. The Collectors had been reappointed to the districts, but their duties with regard to them were vague.

Under Cornwallis

In these circumstances Cornwallis came to India with instructions from the Directors to settle with the zamindars a moderate rate which should be regularly and punctually collected. The ryots in this way were completely eliminated. The Board of Revenue was headed by Sir John Shore who by the time Cornwallis arrived, had

collected sufficient practical experience in the revenue matters. The Chief Sheristadar, James Grant, was developing close acquaintance with the revenue records and in due course of time possessed a rich theoretical knowledge which could be helpful to Cornwallis. Among the other important and experienced officers whose services were at the disposal of the new Governor-General, were Charles Stuart, Duncan and Sir William Jones.

Before arriving at a final solution of the problem of revenue settlement, the early reforms introduced by Cornwallis with the help of these officers included (1) further reduction of the number of districts from 35 to 23, for the sake of economy. (2) The revenue and judicial duties were combined once again when the Collectors already appointed in the districts were asked also to administer civil justice. Later on some powers of criminal justice were also transferred to them. In civil justice the Collectors were to be assisted by the Indian Registrars who were authorised to dispose of cases upto the value of Rs. 200.

In order to remove corruption, the salary rates of the Collectors were enhanced from Rs. 200 to 1,500 per month, and in addition they were to enjoy a commission on the collections they made which exceeded their regular salaries considerably. The powers of the Collectors were defined and added to in 1788 and again in 1790.

The yearly settlements introduced in 1777 were permitted to continue till Cornwallis studied the whole matter and decided on some permanent scheme. As the required information was gathered, and initial changes made, now a regular discussion started with regard to the system of revenue settlement.

Two schools of thought emerged, one led by James Grant, the Chief Sheristadar, whose researches into the records proved that the zamindars had no *locus standi*. They could be considered neither the owners of land nor state officials connected with the collection of land revenue. James Grant was of the opinion that a long term settlement instead of a permanent one should be made, and that the State should be considered the real owner of land with powers to raise its revenue demands from its tenants to any extent.

On the other hand, the second school of thought was led by John Shore who had practical knowledge of the system and refused to consider the zamindars as mere squatters. He wanted the zamindars to be considered as the proprietors of land and the State demand to be based on the theory of contract under which it could not be raised beyond a certain limit. He favoured a long term settlement with them which would give them an inducement to develop their lands and add to the prosperity of the State. He did not favour a permanent settlement, for he thought the revenue machinery

of the State was just in its infancy, and the knowledge so far collected did not entitle them to make any permanent commitments.

Cornwallis agreed with John Shore, but refused to admit that they had not yet collected sufficient information to entitle them to a permanent settlement with the zamindars. Himself an English landlord, he wanted to create a class of zamindars which should form the backbone of the State. The broad instructions he had brought from the Directors, and the provisions of the Parliament's Act of 1784 in this connection, encouraged him towards this direction and in 1790 he introduced a decennial settlement with the zamindars, which as he announced, was likely to be made permanent. The matter in the meanwhile was referred to the Directors, and their sanction having been received, in 1793 the existing settlement was made permanent.

Permanent settlement of Land Revenue in Bengal, 1793

(1) The settlement was made with the zamindars who were given proprietary rights over land with the condition that in case of a defalcation, a part of their land could be disposed of by the State to realise its dues (2) The State being relieved of all ownership rights, it could not claim any feudal dues such as the succession fee. (3) The rates fixed with the zamindars were double the rates that obtained in 1765, on the plea that the permanent settlement would not entitle the State to any share in the future increase of production and prosperity. (4) All judicial powers were taken away from the zamindars and (5) they were made free in their relations with the ryots on the condition that they would give them pattas. If a zamindar violated a patta given to his ryot, the latter had the right to go to a court of law against him.

The permanent system thus introduced had its merits as well as demerits. Among the merits one may count, (1) that the system introduced by Cornwallis was no hasty measure. The matter had been discussed in the time of Hastings: it had been discussed among the Directors and in the Parliament. Pitt, the Prime Minister, Dundas the President of the Board of Control and many other statesmen of the time gave their blessings to it. (2) As a result of this system the income of the State was considerably increased, as the rates fixed were double the rates that obtained in 1765. (3) Yet the expenditure involved in periodical settlements, and on the army of officials constantly kept busy in the revenue matters, was now considerably cut down. (4) The Company officers could now sit calmly in contentment, for cultivation or no cultivation, the tax once fixed had to be paid, and the Company was sure of its annual income, and of the time it would accrue and be realised. (5) The Company in India was short in supply of experienced and trained officers. The permanent settlement relieved a large number of them to be available for other

duties, and the Company could now give serious attention to the administrative reforms in the country,

(6) The zamindars, whether they had any *locus standi* or not, were at the time the only people who counted in the society. The ryots had no voice, and an organised class of intellectuals had yet to take its birth. If the zamindars were mollified the whole people were calm, and the British could hope for peace to reign the whole length and breadth of the country. But if they were dissatisfied, they could arouse the common man, and make it difficult for the British to rule. They had developed a position which just could not be ignored. By making a settlement with them on permanent lines, the British created in the country a class of people who for their very existence depended on them, and therefore formed a loyal section of the society which could stand by them through thick and thin.

(7) Prior to the Permanent Settlement there was no stability in the agricultural profession. Already in 1772 there had been a lot of dislocation when land was farmed out for five years to the highest bidders and many hereditary zamindars were sent adrift into the streets. Thereafter, yearly settlements left everybody guessing as to what would come next. Nobody was sure of his future, and therefore there was discontentment, disaffection and lack of concentration on the job. These evils were now removed.

(8) Periodical settlements dampened the spirit of reforms. For, the moment an increase in production was shown, it would come to the notice of the appraising officials and in the next settlement a major part of it would be mopped up. The zamindars, the farmers and ryots, everybody was afraid of applying his mind to the land. Now when the rates were permanently fixed, the increase in production was expected to remain with those who worked. It gave them inducement to work and to invest in the improvement of land; yet more so because the annual payments had to be made, crops or no crops, the rates fixed were high, and in case of a defalcation the land of equivalent value was to be taken away and disposed of to realise the State demands. There could be no evasions.

(9) The State interference into the private lives of the zamindars at times such as of new successions when a succession fee would have to be paid, was stopped. (10) If the State could not participate in the increasing prosperity of those who worked hard on the land, for the State rates were fixed once for all, it could benefit indirectly through entertainment taxes, and the taxes on other economic activities such as trade, which were bound to develop with the development of the agricultural produce. (11) The system was introduced all over the State and it gave it uniformity. The judicial powers were taken away from the zamindars, and this brought about a twofold advantage. Whereas on the one hand it left zamindars free to apply themselves to agriculture, on the other hand it introduced an

efficiency in the system of justice when it was transferred into the hands of those who were trained for this job.

Lastly, its supporters said, if the system showed a bias towards the zamindars, it did not completely overlook the interests of the ryots. The zamindars had to grant them pattas, and if they encroached upon their rights, the ryots could straightway go to a court of law and fight for their protection.

The advantages of the Permanent System, thus, were varied and many. But it had its darker side as well. (1) The settlement was not made with the real proprietors of the land and the position of a zamindar was not in every case clearly defined. In the initial stages, therefore there was a lot of litigation against the Government and amongst the people themselves which ruined many a family. (2) The rates fixed were high. Those who could not pay, had to see their lands snatched away and sold off by the State. In this way many were dispossessed of their hereditary profession. (3) Those who could withstand the pressure of the State demand at the earlier stage by dint of hard work and industry, later on grew rich, deserted their villages and settled in the cities as absentee landlords, a class of parasites who lived on land, but who never looked after it. (4) The absentee landlords appointed their agents who collected rent from the ryots, and this brought about sub-feudation and created a class of intermediaries another set of parasites who increased the burden on the ryots through all sorts of legal and illegal exactions. Piddington, a Bengal civilian wrote : "I fear to be discredited when I state that from twenty to forty per cent on the actual jamabandi (legal rent) is yearly extorted from the poor ryot." "A bad season," we may quote Ram Gopal, "enriched the landlord, because his tax was remitted, and he still exacted the rent, while it ruined the tenant because he lost his crop, and was still obliged to pay both the rent and the tax."

(5) The pattas were not always granted by the zamindars to the ryots, and where they were granted, they were never properly followed. The law permitted the ryots to go to a court of law for their protection against the zamindars but it gave them neither the means to do so, nor the contacts which the zamindars enjoyed and could manipulate at will.

(6) Setton Carr says : "The Permanent Settlement somewhat secured the interests of the zamindars, postponed those of the tenants and permanently sacrificed those of the State." For the State could realise only a fixed demand even if there was a tenfold increase in the productivity of land. Thus, whereas in Punjab 60 per cent of the State income came from the land revenue, and in U.P. the land revenue contributed as much as 50 per cent, in Bengal the Government

had to depend only on the entertainment taxes and stamp duties."¹

(7) Settlement was made with zamindars who were mere revenue farmers. There is a proverb in the Punjabi language ; *Ag lewan ayee malik han bethi* i.e. she came to borrow a spark of fire, but became master of the house. The same applied to the zamindars. The ryots, real owners of the land became homeless in their own homes. Such justice was never heard of before.

THE JUDICIAL REFORMS

Conditions before Cornwallis

Another department in which Lord Cornwallis brought about far-reaching reforms was the judicial, where civil and criminal courts had already been working under the names of the Diwani and Nizamat Adalats, but in which several changes were called for in order to bring about efficiency and economy. Some of the defects from which the existing system suffered on the eve of the arrival of Lord Cornwallis were as under.

The criminal justice was still under the Nawab, Mubarak-ud Daula, whose primary function during this period remained the submission of humble petitions for the removal of his financial distress. The Deputy Nawab in whom the supreme control of criminal justice was actually vested, and who was responsible for the appointment and removal of the judges, was so circumscribed by limitations imposed by the British, that he was incapable of introducing any far-reaching reforms.

The Indian officials of the criminal courts completely lacked integrity. They were nominated in an irregular manner, and continued residing in one locality where they established their contacts and promoted their own ends. The zamindars who were entrusted with the police duties, continued in league with the criminals, and the petty police officials appointed under them continued to fleece the people. Reports of the magistrates constantly complained against the dishonesty and inefficiency of these Indian officials.

The Muslim law which was the law of the criminal courts, had certain glaring defects. It compromised for murder in the way that it gave the privilege of giving a pardon to the prosecutor. N. Majumdar writes in this connection : "Homicide was allowed by the Islamic Law to be compounded by a pecuniary compensation to the next of kin of the deceased and obtaining from him a Razinama. At Chittagong five men were once convicted of robbery and murder. The complainant entered into an agreement with the culprits, received the sum of Rs. 80, executed a Razinama and

1. See Ram Gopal, *The British Rule in India*, Delhi, 1963, pp. 35-37.

saved them from the gallows."¹ *Such Razinamas could be secured* from the victims as well, who had been stabbed, wounded and maimed, but who survived. There were several other such defects in the law, and the methods of trial and punishment also needed to be reformed. "While a show of justice was maintained by meting out heavy sentences, even death, to the accomplices and the petty and subordinate offenders, gold softened justice and secured an easy escape for the opulent leaders of gangs."²

Fifth, the salaries of the Court officials were low. A Daroga, who was the pivot of the administration of justice, thus, received only one hundred rupees per month; Qazi and Naib Qazi who were expected to be doctors of the Muslim law, received respectively Rs. 66 and Rs. 35. These officers had numerous opportunities of gaining pecuniary advantages by shielding the notorious criminals, and it was natural for them to make use of such opportunities. Lord Cornwallis had no faith in the Indians, as he declared in 1789, that "all regulations for reform of that (Faujdari) department would be nugatory, whilst the execution of them depends upon any native whatsoever."³

The jail buildings built of straw and mud were always in the danger of being burnt down or blown away by a storm. They were unusually crowded and the conditions in them were extremely unhealthy.

When the hostile majority in the time of Warren Hastings, returned the Sadar Nizamat Adalat to Murshidabad, it separated political authority from the judicial with the natural consequence that while the Nawab and his Deputy had no powers to introduce a reform, the British authorities at Calcutta were placed too far away to see and feel the need of it.

Reforms under Cornwallis

Such were the circumstances under which Cornwallis came. His judicial reforms were introduced at three different times, in 1787, 1790 and 1793, and they constitute an important landmark in the growth of the Indian judiciary.

The keynote of his reforms in 1787 was economy. In that year, as already discussed, he reduced the number of districts from 35 to 23, and placed each one of them under a collector, who was a covenanted servant of the Company. All the functions of collection and management of revenue, and civil and criminal justice were

1. See Majumdar, N. *Justice and Police in Bengal 1765-1793*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 251.
2. *ibid*, p. 258.
3. *ibid*., p. 250.

united in this Collector, but he was placed under different authorities so far as his different functions were concerned. Thus, from his revenue court, the appeal lay in a Maal Adalat, and higher up in the Board of Revenue at Calcutta. From his civil court the appeal could be carried to the Sadar Diwani Adalat, the decision of which was final up to the value of Rs. 5,000. For the cases of a higher value, the appeal lay before the King-in-Council. Besides, the office of the Registrar was created, to which the Collector could forward cases up to the value of Rs. 200. But the decision of a Registrar could be final only after it had been countersigned by a Collector in his judicial capacity.

The defect of the system was obvious, as Cornwallis himself later on admitted that "if the regulations for assessing and collecting the public revenue are infringed, the revenue officers themselves must be the aggressors, and the individuals who have been wronged by them in one capacity can never hope to obtain redress from them in another". The concentration of power obviously was bad.

The second set of changes introduced by Lord Cornwallis in the judicial machinery, were in 1790, and they pertained to its criminal branch. The Sadar Nizamat Adalat which had been brought back by the hostile majority in the time of Hastings to Murshidabad, was shifted once again to Calcutta where it was to meet at least once a week, and was to keep a regular record of its work. This in a way amounted to taking away from the Nawab whatever authority he had in the field. When the court was placed at the headquarters of the Company at Calcutta, the English authority in criminal justice was entrenched. This court could recommend cases for mercy to the Governor-General-in-Council, the latter being assisted in the matter by the Chief Kazi and two Muftis.

Besides, in 1790, the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were divided into four divisions, each of which was placed under a Circuit Court which was to be presided over by two covenanted servants of the Company. The decisions of the Circuit Courts were to be executed by magistrates, but their awards of the punishment of death and perpetual imprisonment were subject to confirmation by the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. The district Collector was made a Magistrate who could apprehend the cases of theft, robbery and murder, convict or acquit a person in petty cases, but for serious cases he had to put the accused in a Faujdari jail where the latter was to remain till the Circuit Court met in the district headquarters, and he could be brought before it for trial. Except in serious cases of murder etc., the magistrate could also let off a person on bail till the Circuit Court met.

Cornwallis increased the salaries of the judicial officers in a liberal manner to raise them above the temptations of bribery and

illegal exactions, and to make the service attractive for men of ability and character.

Another set of judicial changes were introduced in 1793, and they were so important that every "civil servant from the beginning of the nineteenth century has looked upon 1793 as the commencement of new era." The union of revenue and judicial authorities made by Lord Cornwallis in 1787, as already discussed, proved harmful. Hence in 1793, the Collectors were deprived of their judicial powers, and were now left only with the powers of the collection of rent. The revenue Courts, or the Maal Adalats, were also abolished, making provision for all the revenue cases now to be brought in the ordinary civil courts, or the Diwani Adalats. The Diwani Adalats were established one each in a district, to be presided over by a covenanted servant of the Company who would be appointed on his post after he took the prescribed oath of office. The Diwani Adalats were to decide the civil and revenue cases ordinarily according to the Hindu and Muslim customs and usages using equity and reason where customs and usages failed to help.

The Regulation of 1793 also provided for four Provincial Courts of Appeal for the three provinces, one each to be established at Calcutta, Patna, Murshidabad and Dacca. Each of these courts was to be presided over by three covenanted servants who were also to preside over the Circuit Courts of the respective division. The decisions of these courts were final up to the value of Rs. 1,000. For the cases of higher value the appeal lay to the Sadar Diwani Adalat whose authority was final upto the value of Rs. 5,000. Above Rs. 5,000 appeal was permitted to the King-in-Council.

The Regulation also provided for the appointment of Indian Munsifs who were to work on an honoray basis and decide cases up to the value of Rs. 50, subject to confirmation by the Diwani Adalat.

Besides, the Regulation abolished the court fee which the litigants previously had to pay. And the lawyers were to charge only a moderate fee against the risk of their being disqualified.

Another Regulation was passed the same year, which was more important in the fact that it established the supremacy of law. By this Regulation, an Indian could now proceed even against a servant of the Company, a case against whom could be brought before a Diwani Adalat, if it was up to the value of Rs. 500, and before the Supreme Court at Calcutta if it was of a higher value. The Regulation said : "The official acts of the collectors might be challenged in the Civil Courts, that Government, itself might be sued like any private individual, and that such suits could only be

cognisable by judges who had no direct or personal interest in enforcing the claims of Government”

Besides, with the help of Sir George Barlow, in the same year Cornwallis prepared a Code of Regulation for the guidance of the judicial officers. The commercial services were clearly distinguished from the administrative services, and the servants of the Company were required to make a choice between the two. This code is an important contribution of Cornwallis to the Indian judiciary and it is known as the Cornwallis Code.

The Other Connected Reforms

Of the other reforms introduced in the time of Cornwallis, one was the assignment of duty to the magistrates regularly to inspect the jails at least once a month and see that the prisoners were properly treated, were kept in separate blocks according to their grades, and their health was properly looked after. The sick prisoners were to be looked after by the Company's surgeons. The jail establishments were clearly defined and proper arrangements were made to meet their expense.

A resolution of October, 1792 passed by the Government of Cornwallis, decided to build five new spacious and strong jails each year. There were to be two blocks in each jail, one for civil and the other for criminal offenders, and its dimensions were determined according to the number of prisoners to be lodged in it. The different category of prisoners were to be placed in different apartments and separate arrangements were to be made for women.

The police system of the country was also overhauled. The Regulations of 1792 made the police administration uniform throughout the British dominions, and placed it in the hands of the English authorities. The zamindars and farmers were now no more to perform any police duties, and they were called upon to disband their police establishments.

For the purposes of police establishment, each magistrate was to divide his district into units of 400 square miles each. Each unit was placed under a Daroga. Similarly, the big cities like Murshidabad and Patna were divided into wards, each under a Daroga, just as the large towns were also to get one such official each. A Daroga was to be helped by other officers selected and appointed by the magistrates, and the village watchmen continued in service, under the command of the Darogas of their respective areas. These watchmen were to apprehend criminals and send them up to the Darogas who would produce them before the courts of law. A new tax was levied on merchants and traders to meet the expense of the police establishments which now amounted to Rs. 3,19,440 per annum.

Certain changes were also introduced in the Muslim law in its application to the criminal courts. Thus in the murder cases the prosecutors now no more could give Razinamas, and the courts had to complete their job even in the case of the death of a prosecutor. Mutilation of prisoners was banned, and it was decided that in lieu of the mutilation of one limb, a criminal could be awarded rigorous imprisonment for seven years, while where a criminal under the Muslim law had to lose two limbs, he would undergo a rigorous imprisonment for 14 years. All distinctions were removed between the evidence of the Muslims and non-Muslims, and the evidence of women where it was not valid, was made so.

An offender who had spent at least six months in jail and was destitute of all means of subsistence, was to get financial help for one month which should not exceed Rs. 5, and a resolution of 1792 directed "the magistrates to pay to all indigent prosecutors and witnesses a daily allowance of two annas for the maintenance during attendance at the courts of circuit (for which people had to travel long distances), together with a similar amount as a travelling allowance, for the required number of days."¹

Among the defects of the reforms of Lord Cornwallis, one that can be pointed out was his complete want of confidence in the Indians that was exhibited by the fact that they now could be appointed only upto the post of Munsiff, and no higher. The judicial and police administration having expanded, the greater burden was placed on the tax payer.

But merits of the reforms of Cornwallis were far-reaching. Separation of the judicial from revenue authority was made, the inequities of the Muslim law were considerably removed, greater efficiency in the administration of justice was introduced, the expanded and reorganised police administration helped in bringing about law and order in the country which since long had vanished, and last but not least, supremacy of law was established. Truly, in the time of Cornwallis, a new era commenced in the history of the Indian judiciary.

OTHER CHANGES

Lord Cornwallis also introduced some commercial reforms for the Company itself, under which the membership of the Board of Trade was reduced from 11 to 5, and the bargains conducted by it were placed under the strict supervision of the Governor-General and Council. A Resident was appointed at each custom post, with the duty to recommend the best modes for the investment of the Company's capital.

The Covenanted Civil Services were also reformed. Private

1. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-289.

trade was now strictly prohibited, the system of paying commissions to the servants was stopped and the acceptance of gifts was banned by a regulation strictly enforced. As against this, the emoluments of the servants of the Company were enhanced. Cornwallis had no faith in the integrity of the Indians, and they were completely debarred from higher posts of responsibility.

Madras presidency was expanded and made of respectable size by the inclusion into it of some of territories annexed from Mysore after the third Mysore War. The whole of the Malabar coast was now under the British at Madras.

Cornwallis retired from India in 1793 and reached England early in 1794, where soon after he was appointed "Master-General of the Ordnance with a seat in the Cabinet." In 1798 he became Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, after he had rejected the proposal of going back to India. He resigned from Ireland in 1801. Shortly after he was sent to Amiens as plenipotentiary in order to sign the peace treaty with Napoleon. After the recall of Wellesley, he was persuaded to go to India once again. He was more than sixty-six when he landed at Calcutta in July 1805. His health was deteriorating, and on 5 October, the same year, the Indian soil claimed his body when he died and was buried at Ghazipur.

The services of Cornwallis to India were great. His reforms of the civil services, the remodelling of the judicial machinery and the introduction of permanent system of land revenue, indeed all constitute an important stage in the history of India. Nor could the importance of the gains he made after the third Mysore War be minimised for the British. In every field, it is said, he completed the work of Warren Hastings.

"Cornwallis was the first English nobleman to govern India, the only man to do so twice, on two Commissions separated by a long interval, and the first ruler who had not lived for many previous years in the country. He was also one of the founders of sound Indian government."¹

THE CHARTER ACT, 1793

Before closing this chapter, we may refer to the Charter Act of 1793, passed by the British Parliament in the year.

Cornwallis retired from India. The East India Company having been granted the monopoly of trade in 1773 only for twenty years, in 1793 this monopoly had to be renewed unless the Company was desired to be dissolved. In 1793 thus the trading rights of the Company were renewed for the next twenty years. The Charter was

1. See Mersey, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.

renewed again in 1813 and then again in 1833 and 1853. The measures passed to the effect are known as the Charter Acts.

The Circumstances

The Charter Act of 1793 was the first of the series of the Charter Acts passed by the Parliament between 1793 and 1853. Although the Act was considerably long, yet in its nature it was essentially a consolidating enactment bringing about no important change in the constitution or in the functions of the existing institutions relating to the Company.

Of the circumstances leading to this Act one was that 20 years had passed after 1773, necessitating the renewal of the trading rights of the Company. The Directors applied for the purpose and the matter was taken up in the Commons where some of the ministers being favourably disposed towards the Company, the passage of the required Act was not difficult. Pitt was in full power at the time and Dundas was there with his expert knowledge in the Indian affairs.

The Company was lucky in yet another way. England was at this time in the thick of her troubles with France where a revolution having broken out under Napoleon, it was seeking an imperialist expansion all over Europe. No serious efforts were therefore made by the opponents of the Company for the curtailment of its monopoly rights. The newspapers of the country also did not take much notice and the Bill quietly passed through the Parliament in an unexampled manner, as Pitt himself remarked.

The Provisions

(1) The trading monopoly of the Company was extended for a further period of 20 years with the exception that the private British traders were permitted to trade with the East upto 3,000 tons of shipping. (2) The expenses and the salaries of the members of the Board of Control and of their staff were now to be entirely charged on the Indian revenues. (3) The two junior members of the Board were now no more required to be Privy Councillors. (4) An effort was made in the Act to regulate the Company's finances. Assuming a particular sum as an annual surplus in the Company's accounts, out of this an amount of Rs. 5 lakh was to be absorbed in increasing the dividends from 8% to 10% and another amount of Rs. 5 lakh was to go annually to liquidate the Company's debts. The Company was required to meet the actual expenses of the royal forces in service in India, though the matter in this connection upto the end of 1792 was adjusted by wiping out all the Company's debts. The Act also empowered the Crown to divert, without giving any consideration to the Company's investment, all the revenues of India towards defence when it felt it necessary. (5) An Act had previously been passed

absolving the Directors of the requirement of the previous royal consent for the appointment of the Governor-General. This Act changed the position and the King's approval for the appointment of a Governor-General, Governors and Commander-in-Chief was once again declared necessary.

(6) The Council of the Governor-General and those of the Governors of the other presidencies, were to consist of three members each. Nobody could be appointed a Councillor unless he had been a resident of India for at least twelve years at the time of his appointment. (7) The Governor-General was empowered to appoint a Vice-President to preside over the meetings of his Council in his absence. (8) The power of the Governor-General to overrule the decisions of his Council was repeated and extended now to the Governors. But such overriding authority was not permitted in matters of legislation, taxation and justice. This veto was, in fact, to be applied in special cases where the safety, tranquillity and the interests of the British possessions were involved. (9) The Governor-General's authority to superintend, control and direct the presidencies in their foreign affairs was fully established and it was declared that whenever the Governor-General visited a presidency, he would supersede the local Governor. (10) The Commander-in-Chief was now no more to be an ex-officio member of the Council. It was only when the "Directors desired it that he could be appointed to its membership." (11) The Governor-General was empowered to levy a sanitary tax in the presidency towns. (12) The Act also declared that no high official of India, whether Governor-General, Governor or a Commander-in-Chief, could proceed outside India on leave so long as he held the office.

(13) The schemes of conquest and extension of territorial holds in India were once again declared to be repugnant to the Company's interests. (14) The admiralty jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Calcutta was extended to the High Seas. (15) The Governor-General-in-Council was empowered to appoint Justices of Peace in the presidencies. These Justices were to look after the sanitary conditions of the respective presidency towns, but they could not sit in the Courts of Oyer and Terminer and Goal Delivery unless invited for the purpose. (16) The ranks of the Company's civil servants were to be graded on the basis of seniority, and the promotion to a higher post was to be considered on the basis of the length of service. Only a covenanted servant who had served in India at least for three years was to be eligible to hold an office carrying an annual salary of more than £ 500. And for appointment to the offices the salaries of which exceeded £ 1,500, £ 3,000 and £ 4,000 a year, the service of six, nine and twelve years respectively was declared necessary. (17) The receiving and demanding of gifts was to be a misdemeanour. (18) And finally the sale of liquor was placed under licences.

A Review

The Act, though very long, brought about no significant changes either in the constitution or in the functions of the Company or in its subordinate institutions as it is obvious from its provisions. Yet, it was unfortunate that the Act threw the entire burden of the salaries and the expenses of the Board and its subordinate staff on the Indian revenues. Later on the Indians had to start a bitter agitation against this provision, but it was not before the Act of 1919, that the wrong was amended.

On 9 April 1782 the Commons had passed five resolutions in which the conduct of the Court of Directors was applauded for the fact that they had forbidden all wars in India except those in self-defence. The expansion of territorial acquisitions in India had been declared repugnant to the British interests, repeatedly by the Parliament as well as the Directors. The Act of 1781 contained a recital to this effect and that of 1793 did well in confirming once again the policy of non-aggression in India. But just as before the year 1793, so after it, the aggressive wars continued in India, and although the instances of it existed before, the Act of 1793 made no effective provisions to see that the directions of the Directors and the Parliament in this connection were not flouted. Thus, in violation of the provision of this Act the Mysore War was fought in 1799 which ended in the unscrupulous annexation of the major part of that State. The Nawab of Surat was pensioned off in 1800 and his territories occupied. The Nawab of Carnatic met the same fate in 1801 and that of Farrukhabad in 1802. The aggressive wars carried on against the Marathas (1803-05) are too well-known to be discussed. This was thus supposed to be a serious failure of one of the provisions of the Act of 1793.

Maratha Confederacy and Lord Cornwallis

Peace established between the British and the Marathas by the Treaty of Salbai, 1782, continued in the time of Cornwallis. There was no open clash between the two, nor was there any need of it for the expansion of the British territorial hold in this country. For the forces of disruption existed among the Marathas themselves. The Maratha body politic was already diseased, whatever vitality it had was already on the wane, the rot had set in as a result of the personal ambitions of the individuals and as a consequence of the failure of the Marathas to evolve a standard of administration that could win them the sympathies of the common man. The Maratha chiefs could exist as dependents, not as sovereigns, for that was the merit they possessed. But time was needed to bring home this realisation and automatically to invite the British sway over them. The time of Cornwallis was the appropriate time for this.

Origin of the Confederacy

Before we discuss the different Maratha chiefs who constituted the Maratha confederacy, and the contest among them in the time of Cornwallis, it would be interesting to have a few facts with regard to the origin of this confederacy.

So long as Shivaji lived, there was a centralised monarchy, and the officers of the state, civil or military were all paid in cash, not in jagir. With the death of Shivaji, however, the circumstances developed in such a manner as to make it necessary for jagirs to be granted. These jagirdars became powerful in due course of time and thus the whole Maratha government became a collection of decentralised feudatory states which constituted what is known as the Maratha confederacy.

It was in the time of Raja Ram, when the king himself had no

means or will to enter into great military ventures, he allotted different parts of the Deccan to the different army leaders through formal Sanads, to subjugate and to realise from them the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi a part of which they would remit to the king, retaining the rest of it to meet their own expenses. Since the army chiefs had to do this whole job on their own, right from the start they exhibited signs of independence and professed allegiance to the king only in name.

When Shahu was released from captivity by the Mughals, there was a contest between him and Tara Bai to win these military leaders over to their own side. These military generals who by this time had already become petty princes with their respective territories and capitals, became more important and supported or deserted the king and his opponents at their will.

Balaji Vishwanath, the Peshwa, added to the power and independence of these chiefs yet further. He had selfish interests and wanted to make his own office hereditary. Therefore he encouraged others also to make similar claims, lest they should oppose the Peshwa in his own designs. In 1719 when the Maratha claims to Chauth and Sardeshmukhi in the six provinces of the Deccan, and similar claims over some other territories which were not actually in their possession, were recognised by the Mughal Emperor, the different feudatory Chiefs were permitted to put those claims into practice. This also helped them develop their independent authorities, more so when the Peshwa assigned the duty of meeting the expenses of the different departments of the king to the different chiefs. This made the king more or less a pensioner, depending for his supplies on the feudatory chiefs who naturally became more important in this way.

Peshwa Baji Rao I tried to establish his supremacy over all the other chiefs, but he could not go beyond certain limits. Just as with the passage of time, by their exploits and achievements the Peshwas themselves converted their office into a hereditary principality, the other chiefs like Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindhia also asserted their authority. It was Holkar and Sindhia who occupied Baroda and Gwalior and carried the Maratha arms to Delhi and the Doab. Raghuji Bhonsle captured Orissa and levied Chauth on Bengal and Bihar. After the death of Madhav Rao I the office of the Peshwa itself fell from its early importance, like that of the Maratha king as Nana Phadnis the Peshwa's chief-minister collected all powers in his own hands. The feudatory chiefs who were willing to accept the Peshwa's supremacy, refused to acknowledge the usurpation of power by his chief minister, and asserted their respective independence yet further in the time of Lord Cornwallis. The last occasion on which the different chiefs joined together was the battle of Kharde fought against the Nizam in 1795.

An account of the different chiefs who developed their feudatory powers and constituted the Maratha confederacy to contest with one another for power may now follow.

Nana Phadnis

Of the different Maratha chiefs one was the Peshwa whose power now declined, but on whose behalf his chief minister Nana Phadnis contested. Of the different important Maratha chiefs who contested between themselves at this time, one was Nana who, interestingly enough, held the hereditary office of Phadnis, or head of the accounts department— interestingly because the curse of heredity which was one of the very important causes leading to the downfall of the Marathas, extended from Raja not only to the office of Peshwa and the generals of the army, but even to the administrative offices such as that of Phadnis. Nana played a very important role in the Maratha history, and it was he who was the real authority behind all that Poona did during the First Anglo-Maratha War. A brief account of his early life may not be out of place.

Born on 12 February 1742, Nana was the son of Janardan Bhanu and Rukhma Bai, a well known family of the Mehendales. He was just fourteen years of age when the hereditary office of Phadnis devolved upon him. His close contacts with the Peshwa's palace offered him an opportunity to develop an acquaintance not only with various administrative problems of the State, but also with the most important political personalities including the young Peshwa Madhav Rao himself, whose uncle Raghoba finding Nana ambitious beyond his years dismissed him from the office of Phadnis. But Madhav Rao recognised his worth and reinstated him as Phadnis on 2 September 1763. This founded an active hostility between Nana and Raghoba which erupted into the open in the time of Narain Rao when the former developed his importance yet further and by his efficiency and loyalty to the Peshwa he was able to win the position of the *de facto* Minister as against the Peshwa's Premier, Succaram Bapu who seemed to be inclined more towards Raghoba, than his nephew, the Peshwa Narain Rao to whom he was Minister-in-Chief.

Between 1772 and 1775 Nana followed a conciliatory attitude towards the British but the intrigues of Motesyn and the English efforts to sow dissensions among the Marathas by espousing the cause of Raghoba, gave him a bad taste with regard to them. Narain Rao was murdered on 30 August 1773 as the result of a palace conspiracy which is said to have been financed by Raghoba, and in which his servant Tulaji Pawar played a direct role. It was Nana who organised a party of the Maratha nobles known as Barbhais, which ostensibly at least, Succaram also supported, and which ultimately succeeded in removing Raghoba from the office of Peshwa. The treaty of Surat between the British and Raghoba stunned him, and

the success with which the Marathas handled their affairs during the First Maratha War, and the humiliations which they inflicted on the British, as already discussed, were all the achievements mainly of Nana; though Succaram Bapu continued as the Premier till at least 1778 when he was blamed of having shown sympathies for the British and was confined at Sinhagad to die in that condition on 2 August 1781.

After the removal of Succaram, Nana established an unchallenged authority at Poona, though outside the city he had to put up with Mahadji Sindhia who reached a secret understanding with the British and stole the thunder out of Nana's victories by signing on his behalf the Treaty of Salbai in 1782 which instead of punishing the British, compromised his position. It was not before February 1783 that Nana ratified this treaty. He was compelled by the circumstances to do so.

Sindhia let him down, yet Nana was a statesman who instead of breaking with him recognised the merits that he possessed, and tried to use them for the common cause of the Marathas which was to establish their supremacy all over Hindustan. Already in 1772 when Nana had just entered active politics, Sindhia and Holkar had established Maratha protection on Shah Alam who was weaned away from the British and reinstated in Delhi. Death of Madhav Rao, the murder of Narain Rao, and their hostilities with the British however, compelled the Marathas to withdraw their armies from Delhi. Now when the Anglo-Maratha War was over, and there was peace in Poona, Nana insisted on Sindhia to go to Delhi once again and win over the Emperor before the British established their influence on him.

Mahadji, however, wanted to take his time. He raised fresh troops, established a strong base in Bundelkhand, engaged Portuguese and French officers to discipline his army and only then he marched towards Delhi. By then Nana received an intelligence from Delhi that the Emperor was once again flirting with the British who wanted to establish a warehouse in the Mughal capital which would secure him ample wealth according to his needs. This was against the assurances the British had given to Sindhia with regard to their non-interference in the Emperor's affairs. On 14 April 1784, Jawan Bakht (later Jahandar Shah), the eldest son of the Emperor slipped out from Delhi and went to Lucknow where he was received by Warren Hastings and the Nawab-Wazir. This added to the anxieties of Nana lest the prince should be exploited by the British to serve their own ends. It was not before 16 November, the same year, that Mahadji Sindhia having reached Delhi, the Emperor bestowed on him the command of the Mughal army and gave him the charge of the administration of Delhi and Agra which made Nana, whose long cherished desire was ultimately fulfilled, happy.

In return for the responsibility granted to Sindhia, the latter had to pay to the Emperor Rs 65,000 per month and such additional amount of money as the revenues of the two provinces might permit. In 1785 Sindhia subdued Muhammed Beg, the rebellious Governor of Agra, and thus consolidated his power outmanoeuvring Brown, the British Resident at Delhi. Nawab's agent reported from Delhi that the Hindu rule had been established upto the Ganges, and that the time was not far away when the whole of India would be captured by the Maratha.

But this was not to be. Sindhia's absence from his headquarters for long developed disaffection among his own nobles, and when he left Delhi to set his own house in order, Ghulam Qadir, a Rohilla chief, and Ismail Beg, a Mughal commander, captured Agra and the territories north of the Ganges, and they asked the Emperor to come to Agra and stay with them. The Emperor having refused this, they marched on Delhi, deposed him and on 10 August 1788 cruelly put out his eyes.¹ The princesses were outraged, and other members of the royal family and servants were mercilessly beaten up. For full nine weeks the whole palace was subjected to inhuman atrocities, rapine and plunder which would put even the most barbaric Huns to shame.

When Nana received this news he saw his dreams of a Hindu empire melting away before his eyes. Luckily, however, Sindhia had not yet lost heart and Nana sent him a reinforcement with the help of which he recovered Delhi and Agra once again, which were now annexed to the Maratha dominions. The unfortunate Shah Alam was put on the throne once again, which was now further reduced to a symbol of something which completely ceased to exist. Ghulam Qadir was captured and after punishing him the same way as the unfortunate Emperor had been treated by him, he was put to death. Similar punishments were meted out to the other conspirators, and thus the wishes of Nana were once again brought to their fruition. Shah Alam expressed his gratitude conferring the title of *Vakil-i-Mutalik* (Vice Regent of the Mughal Empire) on the Peshwa and that of *Mir Bakshigirs* on Sindhia, while Nana received the title of *'Phadnishi'*.

Nana's ambitions in Delhi seemed to have been fulfilled, but Sindhia had in fact made these achievements not to benefit him, but to augment his own position and resources. And no sooner did he finally establish his authority in Delhi, than he marched back to Poona to dislodge Nana himself, as we shall shortly see. In the meanwhile, however, Nana was facing trouble from other quarters as well.

Tipu Sultan of Mysore had not accepted the terms of the Treaty of Salbai relating to him. Consequently, the British in Madras

1. This was a part of tortures inflicted on the Emperor by Qadir in a bid to find out the supposed secret treasure. See Keene H.G., *Madhava Rao Sindhia*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 138.

concluded a separate treaty of Mangalore with Tipu from which the Marathas were completely excluded. Nana did not like this, and in July 1784, concluded an alliance with the Nizam to punish Tipu whom he considered a Maratha dependent. But before the two powers could do anything, Nana got busy against a plot to remove Peshwa Madhav Rao II (also known as Madhav Rao Narain) and put Baji Rao, the son of Raghoba who died at Kopergaon shortly after the Treaty of Salbai, on the throne. Tipu took advantage of the situation and made his preparations and Nana had just crushed the plot and was preparing to renew his demands on Tipu for arrears of tribute, when in 1785 the latter himself took an initiative and attacked the Desai of Nargund, a Brahmin principality, and besides started forcibly circumcising Hindus in the south of the Krishna, with the result that about 2,000 Brahmins destroyed themselves to escape the ignominy.¹ Nana was caught unawares when he discovered that Tipu's power suddenly became formidable, the Nizam was not quite reliable and the safety of the Peshwa lay only in contacting the British for help. The British had already spoiled their relations with Sindhia through whom they were represented in Poona. They had requested the Nana for permission to appoint a direct representative, which was conceded and Charles Malet was appointed as their Resident at Poona. Although the British did not agree to help Nana against Tipu, yet, after "a series of comparatively fertile operations, which were rather more favourable to the Marathas than to Tipu, the latter assuming that the appointment of Charles Malet...and certain military preparations in Bombay and elsewhere prompted the intention of the English to intervene persuaded the Marathas to conclude peace in April 1787."² By this agreement the Marathas restored to Tipu some territories they had recently occupied, and Tipu in return ceded to them towns of Kittur, Badami and Nargund besides, agreeing to pay Rs 45 lakhs.

Mahadji Sindhia

Nana's attempt at getting the British help was based on the uncompromising attitude of Sindhia as well, about whom a few separate words may be penned.

Illegitimate son of Ranoji, an army leader of the Peshwa Balaji Viswanath, Mahadji (also called Madhav Rao) Sindhia was born about 1730. His father Ranoji started his career as a bodyguard and slipper-bearer of the Peshwa, but through his selfless service won a military fief in Northern Malwa and he fixed up his headquarters at Ujjain, soon rising to prominence. He had five sons, including the illegitimate one Mahadji. All the four died before the third battle of Panipat against Ahmed Shah Abdali, 1761, or in that action

1. See Nandkarni, R.V. *Rise and Fall of the Maratha Empire*, Bombay, 1944, p. 253.
2. *Cambridge History of India*, V. p. 365.

where Mahadji was also crippled, but saved as the last of his race to succeed to patrimony after the death of his father which took place at some undetermined period. After the battle of Panipat we find him "laying the foundation of sovereignty in Central India; where his fief was; and being in command of a choice body of 15,000 cavalry, he soon made himself virtual master of the territories between the Narbada and the Chambal."¹

It was Mahadji who had been mainly responsible for the restoration of Shah Alam in Delhi in 1772. The death of Madhav Rao, the murder of Narain Rao and the First Maratha War compelled him to leave Delhi. But all through the Maratha war he was anxious to get back to Delhi and we have seen how he managed the Treaty of Salbai and secured an assurance from the British not to interfere in the affairs of Shah Alam.

As soon as the Treaty of Salbai had been signed, Sindhia started raising fresh troops and got them disciplined by the French and Portuguese officers. He captured Gohad, occupied the fort of Gwalior, and thereafter marched to Delhi in 1784 where the Mughal Emperor honoured him by bestowing on him the command of the Mughal army as we have already seen. The prestige of Sindhia at this time was at its top, but it was hollow. He unwittingly aroused hostility of the British when he insisted on the Emperor to claim his tribute from them or recall the grants made in lieu of that. Besides, he had been appointed deputy of the Emperor which aroused the jealousy not only of the Mughal officers, but also of the Poona authorities who were always anxious that whatever honours the Maratha chiefs won, should be won only in their name. But the rewards of Sindhia were not commensurate with his responsibilities or with the jealousy they aroused. The Emperor conferred on him the titles, but not the control of the crown lands, nor of the royal forts and treasures. Sindhia had to make heavy payments to the Emperor for his maintenance, incur an expenditure of seven lakh rupees per month on his own troops numbering about 30,000, and three lakhs on the imperial contingent. The revenues of Delhi and Agra were not sufficient to produce much of a surplus after meeting the administrative charges.

Nor were the things very encouraging back at home, where administration suffered from the lack of proper attention, and where Rajput and Muslim jagirdars chafed under his exacting demands. To add to this was the British hostility which he is said to have aroused by asking the Emperor to demand his tribute as under the Treaty of Allahabad, 1765, and which resulted in closer contacts between them and Nana. The troubles mounted, he fell into a debt of fifty lakh rupees right in the year 1784 itself, and

1. Keene *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

decided to march to Jaipur and realise from there a tribute of three crore rupees to help him out of the woods. But the things shaped themselves in a different way. He was defeated at Jaipur jointly by the Rajput chiefs who were helped also by the Muslim jagirdars. When he made his second attempt to subdue his enemies, he was deserted by the imperial contingent under the command of Mohammad Beg and his nephew Ismail. His own army fell into arrears of pay, it began to be thinned by desertions, and when Ghulam Qadir marched against the Emperor in Delhi, his son-in-law, Deshmukh was forced to leave the royal family to its own fate and flee.

Soon, however, the conditions changed. Nana, though jealous of the rising power of Sindhia, had never desired Delhi to go out of the Maratha hold. He despatched a reinforcement. The Mughal nobles also fell out among themselves, and Sindhia received requests from Mirza Jawan Bakht for help. Thus strengthened, Sindhia recovered Delhi together with the unfortunate Emperor in 1789 and dealt out fitting punishments to the miscreants like Ghulam Qadir. He defeated Ismail Beg at Patan, in Rajputana, the following year, and in 1791 the Rajput chiefs were worsted at Mirtha, and again at Jodhpur. All this made Nana again jealous, and he is said to have encouraged Holkar to create troubles for Sindhia. But in 1792, the latter met this challenge at Lakheri where Holkar was also made to eat humble pie. This victory established Sindhia's predominance in northern India, and now he decided to go to Poona itself to try his luck.

The grateful Mughal Emperor had conferred the title of Vakil-i-Mutalik on the Peshwa, and under the pretext of conveying it personally to him he marched to Poona. In fact the recent victory of the British over Tipu and Nana's approach to Cornwallis through Haripat expressing his desire to subsidise a British detachment against Sindhia, incensed the latter. As he reached Poona, with all the laurels that he had recently gained, he was given a rousing reception by those who took pride in his exploits, and also by those who wanted to humiliate Nana. At Poona, Sindhia was soon able to overshadow Nana whose complete elimination from the political arena seemed to be in the offing. But destiny laid its wild hands on him and he died in Poona on 12 February 1794, when he was just at the top of his career."¹

Thus was removed one more chief in whose achievements the Maratha nation could glory. But it is doubtful if by his continuing to live a few years more he should in any way have given a lasting strength to the Maratha power to sweep away the British from India,

1. According to the contemporary author of *Tarikh-i-Muzafari*, Sindhia was waylaid by Nana's men and severely wounded due to which he died, the next day. Keene, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

though the flag he hoisted on Delhi continued flying till it was hauled down by Wellesley.

Despite all the qualities which raised Mahadji to prominence in Delhi and Poona, he had some faults, one of them being the excessive self-effacement which quite often alienated the people against him instead of winning. All his life he was busy in collecting power, and had neither the will nor time for improving and consolidating his administration without which no secure foundations of a political power could be laid. Nor was he always scrupulous in politics. His contest for power at Poona pictures him only as an opportunist who could benefit from the statesmanship of Nana in recovering his power in Delhi, but was not willing to repay the debt. "Twice he tried, in crooked ways, to see whether he could presume on the favour of the British authorities to wring from them the tribute of Bengal. In that demand he had a fair ground to go upon, and he need not have been in such a hurry with his absolute, and somewhat abject, disavowals."¹

Yet we may conclude in the words of H.G. Keene : "Clear in the conception of reasonable projects, he was bold and prudent in their realisation without yielding completely to the peculiar temptations of his place and time. In a scene of barbarous anarchy, when all the bonds of society seemed to be unloosed, he was amiable, courteous, and free from cruelty. Although his natural disposition was tenacious to the verge of vindictiveness, he kept it under and gradually cured its faults."²

Gaikwad

Sayaji, an imbecile ruler of Baroda who passed under the title of Gaikwad, was another Maratha chief of the time who held the territories roughly of Gujarat and the Kathiawar peninsula. The administration of his State was handled by Fateh Singh who died in 1789. Between this year and 1792 when Sayaji himself died and was succeeded by Gobind Rao, there was a contest for regency that brought about chaos. The new Gaikwad, however, was an able ruler, and when after his succession was recognised by the Chhatrapati, he set himself to the task of bringing about order in which he succeeded, and thereafter he fell in line with the others of his kin, indulging in intrigues against the Peshwa and the game of self-aggrandisement.

Holkar

Holkar was another such chief who ruled over the south-western part of Malwa, with his capital at Indore. This territory was ruled over by Ahalya Bai, the daughter-in-law of Malhar Rao,

1. Keene, *op cit.*, p. 190.

2. *ibid.*, p. 191.

the founder of this principality. She assumed full powers and continued administering her territories with tact and foresight till 1795 when she died and was succeeded by Tukoji, an aged man who died in 1797. Jaswant Rao, who followed, was interested more in what happened at Poona, than in the administrative problems that existed in Indore. We will have an opportunity of knowing something more about him in the following pages.

Bhonsle

Being capital at Nagpur and whose territories extended from Nagpur to Cuttack, was the only other chief who deserves separate mention. Mudaji who died in 1788, had been detached by the British from the confederacy that Nana organised against them during the First Maratha War. This was possible only due to an active jealousy that existed among the Maratha chiefs. He was succeeded by Raghuji who was no better in this connection than he.

This was the condition of the Marathas in the time of Cornwallis. Their Chhatrapati was a symbolic head whose sacred authority was invoked only at the time of succession. The nationalistic spirit is a thing only of later origin. During the time of which we talk, if anything existed, it was only parochialism. Watan, which was only a personal jagir, was all that mattered with those who counted. The decline of this power, the Maratha confederacy, had already begun, the last Anglo-Maratha Wars gave it the *coup de grace*.

Tipu Sultan and the Anglo-Mysore Wars

Named after a Muslim devotee of Arcot for whom his father, Haidar Ali, had a special veneration, Tipu was born at Devanhalli in 1753. His mother was Fakhur-un-Nissa whose father Mir Moinud-din was for some time the Governor of Kadapa and who, therefore, brought with her the background of an aristocratic and ruling family which should have helped her to influence Tipu's mind towards that direction. When Haidar died in the midst of his hostilities with the British in December 1782, his death was kept a close secret and for many days, not only the British, but even his own army was completely ignorant of the matter till Tipu receiving an express message proceeded towards his main army on the Pennar river where he immediately assumed charge of the inheritance which consisted of vast treasures at Seringapatam, and an army of not less than 90,000 to do his bidding.

We have already seen how after the death of his father, Tipu continued the Second Mysore War against the British till circumstances compelled him to sign peace at Mangalore, the terms of which were favourable more to him than to the British, and which far from reducing his power "increased his prestige, while the manner in which it had been concluded had made the English to lose face."¹

THE THIRD MYSORE WAR UNDER CORNWALLIS, 1790-92

The Circumstances

The circumstances under which Tipu came to power and the way the Second Mysore War had been concluded, fired Tipu, young

1. Hasan, Mohibbul (Ed). *Waqai-i-Manazil-i-Rum* (Diary of a Journey to Constantinople) by Khwaja Abdul Qadir, p. 12.

as he was, with the spirit of restlessness and aggression. He determined on a course to crush the Nizam, destroying the Maratha power, and then turning to the British to drive them out from India with the help of the French. Early in 1785 he conquered Nargund and then captured Kittur which the intervention of the Marathas could not save. Nana's appeal to Macpherson, the British Governor-General for help having gone in vain, he approached Goa for the purpose which alarmed the British into appealing to Poona for a direct representation in their court through a resident. The Nizam supported the Marathas with the result that the latter recovered the lost territories and forced a treaty on Tipu in 1787 which brought an end to his ambitions on this side. The British had appointed L.W. Malet as resident at Poona and some military movements on their part gave Tipu an impression that they were going to join against him. Therefore, he hastened to accept the terms of the treaty offered by the Marathas.

Tipu's youth and ambition, however, would not let him live in peace. Inflated "with notions of his own prowess, and inspired with hostile feelings against the English, (he) was most anxious to unite himself closely with the French, by whose assistance he hoped to subvert the power he both feared and hated."¹ In 1786 he sent a delegation headed by Ghulam Ali Khan to Constantinople with a view to establishing factories in the Turkish dominions; to have himself confirmed on the throne in Mysore by the Caliph, as the Mughal Emperor considered him a usurper and did not give him an investiture, and to secure military help against the British. The envoys were to proceed from Constantinople to France for the same purpose and in 1787 Tipu sent a direct mission also to the French capital. Both these missions however failed from the military point of view. The Sultan of Turkey was busy fighting against Russia and Austria and depended upon the British friendship, while the French government had already assured the British not to give them a cause of provocation. Louis XVI of France suffered from domestic troubles as well which soon after resulted in a cataclysm that overwhelmed the whole of France.²

In the meanwhile Tipu was anxious to develop his hold over the western coast by taking possession of Malabar; and for this reason on 29 December 1789 he attacked Travancore on the plea that the Raja of the place had purchased from the Dutch the territories of Jaikottai and Kranganur which, as he claimed, belonged to the Raja of Cochin who was his feudatory, but to which the Raja of Travancore would not agree. Holland, the Governor of Madras, is said to have accepted a bribe from Tipu, and therefore he turned a deaf ear when Travancore appealed to him for help. Tipu thus had

1. Bowring, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

2. For details see Hasan, Mohibbul *op. cit.*, pp. 161-62.

his way in Travancore which was under the British protection, and he laid waste the whole country with fire and sword. Cornwallis had by this time become the Governor-General of Bengal, and he condemned the action of Holland as a disgraceful betrayal of an ally.

This was sufficient to precipitate the Third Mysore War. The Nizam and the Marathas had already been alienated by Tipu. Cornwallis signed separate treaties with the two powers in 1790, and thus a Triple Alliance against Tipu was formed.

The War

In the first phase of the war, General Medows, the new Governor of Madras planned operations under which General Kelly was sent to attack the Baramahals, while he himself marched westward to reduce the whole of Coimbatore and then enter Mysore through the Gajalhatti Pass. He captured the forts of Karur, Dharapuram and the city of Coimbatore with which the whole of the province fell before the British. Now the plan was to march towards the Gajalhatti Pass which, however, was frustrated by Tipu who made a sudden appearance, inflicted heavy losses on the British at Satyamangalam and forced them to retreat to Coimbatore. Having thus frustrated the immediate designs of the British against his capital, Tipu moved southwards to re-conquer Coimbatore. He captured Erode, Dharapuram and several other places when his attention was drawn towards the Baramahal district.

Kelly who had marched towards the Baramahals, had unfortunately died before he could accomplish anything. He was succeeded by Maxwell who besieged the fort of Krishnagiri, the capital of Baramahals, but Tipu appearing before him, forced him to raise the siege. Shortly after, however, Medows effected junction with Maxwell and Tipu not finding himself strong enough now to dislodge the British from a strong position when they were strictly on the defensive, he marched towards Trinomalai and then Permakoil both of which surrendered, and he now appeared before Pondicherry to seek French help against the British, in which, however, he was not successful.

On the western coast, however, a greater misfortune awaited Tipu. Here the Bombay Governor, General Abercomby and Colonel Hartley took one place after another till before the end of 1790 the whole of Malabar was in their possession.

Generally, however, in the first phase of the war the British failed to carry Mysore before them, with the result that early in 1791 Cornwallis arrived at Madras personally to assume the command of the army. The second phase of the war now commenced. The army was then at Vellore from where Cornwallis decided to march to

Bangalore. Tipu tried to stop the British on the way, but Cornwallis eluded him by feigning an attack on Ambur, and then moving first north, and then due east, he reached Mugli Pass from where marching through Kolar and Hosakote he appeared before Bangalore the fortress of which was supposed to be second in rank in the whole of the Mysore State. First the town was captured and all efforts of Tipu to recover it were foiled. Then the fortress was besieged and captured on 20 March 1791, at the cost of about 500 men killed or wounded, as against more than 1000 whom Tipu lost.

After making necessary repairs in the fort at Bangalore, Cornwallis now marched towards Seringapatam, the capital of Mysore, where Tipu had already made strong arrangements for defence. On his way to the capital, Cornwallis was joined by 10,000 cavalry of the Nizam, but despite all efforts at Seringapatam he failed to dislodge Tipu, and was compelled to retire on 26 May towards Bangalore.

In the meanwhile, the Marathas who had joined the war with a view to recovering the territories between the Tungabhadra and Krishna that Raghoba had surrendered to Haidar Ali in return for his support, sent 10,000 foot and 10,000 horse under Parsu Ram Bhau who besieged Dharwar in September 1790. The Marathas were also supported by some troops sent by Bombay, but it was not before 30 March 1791 that they reduced the fort whereafter they speedily occupied the whole province and now marched and joined Cornwallis at Cherkuli. The Nizam's forces occupied Kopal in April 1791 and thereafter sent a part of the army to capture Kadapu, while another part joined Cornwallis before he invested Seringapatam, as already referred to.

Before Cornwallis withdrew to Bangalore, he had been approached by an envoy sent by Tipu to negotiate peace. Due to certain technical difficulties, however, no discussions could be held. Returning to Bangalore, Cornwallis sent the Marathas to occupy territories to the north-west, the Nizam's troops proceeded on a similar mission to the north-east, while Cornwallis himself was occupied in capturing forts in the Baramahals. Nandidrug the most important of these forts, fell on 19 October. Colonel Maxwell, however, failed to capture Krishnagiri and Coimbatore also had to surrender before the enemy. The preparations for a march against Seringapatam continued in the meanwhile, and on 5 February 1792, supported by some troops of Nizam and the Marathas, Cornwallis was within six miles of Tipu's capital. The operations against Seringapatam were still going on when Tipu sent his envoy once again, the terms were negotiated, and peace was concluded.

Treaty of Seringapatam

Under the treaty of Seringapatam signed in February 1792

(1) Tipu agreed to surrender about half his territories which were divided among the allies. (2) He had to restore all the prisoners of war since the days of Haidar, (3) pay an indemnity of three million rupees and (4) surrender two of his sons, namely Moiz-ud-din and Abdul Khalik, as hostages.

Cornwallis was criticised for having given Tipu a new lease of life when his fate was almost sealed, but he justified his policy by the arguments that Tipu's power of making mischief was effectively curbed, that it satisfied the requirements of the Company's policy of not trying to acquire territories beyond what was required for safety, and that the removal of Tipu and restoration of the captive Hindu Raja to power should have created complications, for the Raja was incapable of ruling without the British support, and the territories usurped from him formed only a part of the total Mysore dominions which still remained with Tipu.

Be that as it may, the Treaty of Seringapatam brought the days of the greatness of Mysore to an end. Although Tipu even now refused to recognise his defeat and tried soon to recover from the humiliation by forced contributions from his subjects to discharge his treaty obligations and to recover his sons from the position of hostages, he never again was formidable enough to destroy the peace of the Nizam, the Marathas or the British. The Nizam benefited by getting territories between the Krishna and the Pennar, and beyond, the Marathas secured all their territories lost since the days of Haidar, while the British got Malabar, Baramahal and other districts on which they had set their heart. The much persecuted Raja of Coorg also was brought within the territorial gains of the British. The "English alliance with the Nizam undoubtedly received a new accession of strength; it may be said to have now reached something of traditional stability which in Europe linked Portugal and England in unbroken alliance."¹

THE FOURTH MYSORE WAR UNDER WELLESLEY, 1799

The Circumstances

After the Treaty of Seringapatam, says Malcolm, the conduct of Tipu "was first marked by an honourable and unusually punctual discharge of the large sum which remained due at the conclusion of the peace to the allies. Instead of sinking under his misfortunes, he exerted all his activity to repair the ravages of war. He began to add to the fortifications of his capital, to remount his cavalry, to recruit and discipline his infantry, punish his refractory tributaries, and to encourage the cultivation of his country, which was soon restored to

1. *Cambridge History of India*, V. p. 337.

its former prosperity.”²

Lord Cornwallis was succeeded in 1793 by Sir John Shore who was not as active as his predecessor, and in whose time, after the death of Chamraj, the Hindu Raja of Mysore in 1796, Tipu usurped even the titular status from his infant son. Ali Jah, son of the Nizam rebelled against the authority of his father in 1795 and Tipu undertook to support his claims on the throne if he agreed to surrender territories south of the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra. Luckily, however, the Nizam was able to make his son a prisoner. But Tipu's capacity to create mischief clearly came to the notice of all.

In 1796 Tipu contacted Zaman Shah, the ruler of Afghanistan, through an embassy and invited him to destroy the Maratha and the English power in India with his cooperation. He also tried to sow dissensions among the Marathas and made attempts to create misunderstandings between the British and the Nizam. Hostilities between the French and the English having broken out in Europe once again, he approached the former for help. An embassy from him reached Mauritius with letters to the French authorities there to make a common cause against the British. About a hundred French volunteers offered their services to the embassy and the Mauritius Governor, General Malartic promised to forward Tipu's letter to France. The Sultan planted a tree of Liberty in Seringapatam and seemed to be catching on the new French slogan of Equality and Fraternity by trying to placate his Hindu subjects.

When Wellesley arrived at Calcutta in May 1798, he saw an impending danger of the French Republic sending an army to India via Egypt. Immediate steps to counteract such possibilities were necessary. He persuaded the Nizam to accept subsidiary alliance with the British, under which he disbanded all his French troops and accepted a British subsidiary force for his protection at his own cost. The Marathas were also contacted, and though he received no assurances, he hoped they would observe strict neutrality. The Madras government was instructed to make ready for possible operations against Tipu, and now he contacted the latter directly to seek explanation for his provocative conduct.

On 8 November 1798 Wellesley wrote to Tipu complaining with regard to the latter's efforts of an alliance with the French against the British when friendly relations existed between the two powers after the Treaty of Seringapatam. He proposed to depute Major Doveton to meet him and discuss the ways by which misunderstandings between the two powers could be removed. Shortly after he addressed a second letter to the effect, but Tipu did not

1. Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, I. p. 669; quoted by Roberts, *India Under Wellesley*, p. 41.

respond to his suggestion. Cornwallis also forwarded to Tipu a letter from the Sublime Porte at Constantinople in which Sultan Salim condemned the French invasion of Egypt and invited Muslims all over the world to fight against them. Tipu, however, persisted in his insolence against the English, with the result that Wellesley found himself with no alternative but to declare war.

The War

Tipu had at this time an estimated strength of 33,000 foot and 15,000 horse, besides his artillery. The British total, together with the Nizam's contingent, which left Vellore under General Harris for Mysore on 11 February 1799, was 37,000. Besides, General Stuart marched from Bombay with 6,400 men, through Coorg.

Tipu attempted to obstruct the march of Stuart towards his capital at the Siddheshwar Pass on 5 March, but failed. He also tried to intercept the march of Harris near Malvalli on 27 March, but retreated after suffering 1,000 killed and wounded. Tipu expecting that the British would march direct from Bangalore and attack Seringapatam from the north, followed the scorched earth policy by destroying all forage on that side. But British marching from south through the regions of ample fodder supply, suddenly, appeared at a distance of 15 miles from Seringapatam. Some more surprises were inflicted on Tipu and on 7 April 1799, the siege-operations against the Sultan commenced. On 14 April the Bombay army having joined Harris, Tipu's position became hopeless. He sent an agent expressing his desire for peace. Harris sent him the conditions to (1) surrender half his territories, (2) release all prisoners, (3) dismiss all the French employed in his army, (4) agree to pay 2 million sterling within six months and (5) send two of his eldest sons together with his four top officers whose names were mentioned, as hostages. No reply came. The British succeeded in effecting a breach in a wall of the fort, and after a tough resistance carried it.

Tipu kept fighting like a common soldier till severely wounded. "He was implored to make himself known to the English troops, from whose commanders he would no doubt have received the attention due to his rank, but he absolutely refused to comply with the suggestion. Soon afterwards some European soldiers entered the gateway, one of whom attempted to take off his richly-jewelled sword-belt, when Tipu, sorely wounded as he was, made a cut at the man, and wounded him in the knee. The enraged soldier levelled his musket and shot him in the head, causing instantaneous death."¹

Thus ended the Fourth Mysore War and now the whole of the country of Tipu lay prostrate before the British. A settlement was

1. Bowring, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

made, under which the British transferred some territories to the Marathas yielding an annual revenue of 2,64,000 pagodas¹ The Nizam got territories worth more than 5 lakh pagodas per annum, while the British retained the whole of Kanara, Coimbatore, Dhara-puram, Seringapatam and other territories the annual revenue of which was almost the same as of the territories gained by the Nizam.

The remaining parts of Mysore, the annual income of which was about fourteen lakh pagodas were bestowed on the infant son of Chamraj, the Raja of Mysore who died in 1796 and whose kingdom had been usurped by Haider. The mother of the infant expressed her gratefulness to the British in the following words "Forty years have elapsed since our government ceased. Now you have favoured our boy with the government of this country, and nominated Purnaiya to be his Diwan. We shall, while the sun and moon continue commit no offence against your government." A Resident was appointed by the British to exercise a general control over the administration of the state, its capital Seringapatam was occupied by them and a subsidiary system was imposed under which the state was to pay an annual subsidy of about 21 lakh rupees to the British.

The sons of Tipu who had arrived at the age of discretion, were taken prisoners and sent away to Calcutta while his important nobles were all given guarantees of an honourable life. Their properties were protected.

Everybody benefited from the fall of Tipu's capital. Arthur Wellesley, the brother of the Governor-General, got £ 1200 worth jewels and £ 7000 in cash. The Commander-in-Chief, General Harris and six other officers were later censured for rapacity. And Arthur wrote to his brother "Scarcely a house in the town was left unplundered and I understand that in Camp jewels of the greatest value, bars of gold, etc. have been offered for sale in the bazars of the army by our soldiers, sepoys and followers. Out of the spoils of Seringapatam, the Court of Directors granted Lord Wellesley £ 100,000 which he declined, and then it was voted that for twenty years he should get an annuity of £ 5,000.

Dundas, the Chairman of the Board of Control, had wanted that the whole of Mysore should be annexed by the British themselves and no part of it should be gifted away to the allies. Wellesley, however, did not want to antagonise the Nizam, and consoled Dundas thus "If you will have a little patience the death of the Nizam will probably enable me to gratify your voracious appetite for land and fortresses. Seringapatam ought, I think, to stay your stomach awhile, not to mention Tanjore and the Poligar countries

1 A pagoda, equal to about three rupees.

2 Thompson and Garrat, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 205.

Perhaps, I may be able to give you a supper of Oudh and the carnatic, if you should still be hungry."¹

Wellesley's Mysore policy has been criticised by certain writers who blame him of being over-sensitive and sufficiently hasty in precipitating the war for which no cause existed. Much of the French fear from which the British in India suffered was only imaginary. Then the other Indian princes also raised French troops, but none was penalised like Tipu. With the vast resources that the British possessed in India, they should have exhibited more of confidence and forbearance, but instead, writes James Mill, in "the state of mind by which the Governor-General, and Englishmen of his intellectual and moral caste, were at that time distinguished, the very existence of a Frenchman was a cause of alarm."²

Wellesley, however, asserted that he was fighting on a principle, and not being guided merely by the amount of power that Tipu had developed to employ against the British. Already sufficient forbearance had been shown towards him by not removing him from power after the Third Mysore War. He, however, persisted in his hostility towards the British, and had adopted a stiff-necked attitude which could not be tolerated for long. Moreover the Home authorities also felt that Tipu had gone far beyond the limits upto which his contacts with the French and other ambitions could be tolerated.

Be that as it may, with the removal of Tipu, one more Indian ruler was removed who, writes James Mill, "sustains an advantageous comparison with the greatest princes of the East."

Tipu was an ardent lover of freedom, and he hated British tutelage in any shape or colour. There is no doubt that if he had been less ambitious and weak in his purpose, he should have continued enjoying the prosperity and position like the Nizam under the British protection. But he did not believe in a compromise, and preferred to die fighting like a common soldier, than fall at his knees and sell away his independence to the British. P.E. Roberts says: "Men are consistent neither to their virtues nor their vices. Such a virile purpose as Tipu's, even though it were maleficent, such constancy, though it merge into fanaticism, are not common in Eastern rulers, and that is why, with all his dreadful faults, he stands out as one of the greatest of our adversaries; for in the Orient, will, purpose and personality are everything; they cleave their way like the steel-shod prow of a great ship through the angry, turbulent and ineffective waves of the political ocean."³

Tipu has been blamed of cruelty towards those who did not

1. Phillips, C.H., *The East India Company*, 1940, p. 104.

2. Mill, *op. cit.*, VI. p. 105.

3. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

belong to his faith. Thus in 1784 when he recovered his territories in Kanara and Malabar from the British, writes Bowring, "he signalled his zeal for the faith of Islam by driving out of the coast region no fewer than 30,000 of its Christian inhabitants, who were forcibly deported into Mysore." "It is stated that Tipu demanded the surrender of the daughters of some of these Christians in order to have them placed in his seraglio, and that, on the refusal of the parents, the latter had their noses, ears, and upper lips cut off, and were then paraded through the streets on asses, with their faces towards the tails of the animals." Tipu's justification for the action was that the portuguese had adopted a similar attitude towards the non-Christians when earlier they had obtained settlements on the western coast.¹

There may be some truth in what is said above, yet to say that Tipu was completely devoid of human feelings towards the non-Muslims does not seem correct. Bowring himself says that in the imminent peril that threatened him before his death, he had "recourse to the prayers and incantations of the Brahmans," which, despite his contemptuous remarks, proves a spirit of toleration in "his orthodox Islamism."² In fact Tipu had many Hindus like Purnaiya and Krishna Rao who held high posts of trust and responsibility under him. And if some English writers are correct in imputing a anti-Christian feelings on Tipu, one wonders how the latter could develop friendly contacts with the French in these circumstances. We may be nearer the truth if we blame Tipu of cruelty towards his enemies, than towards all the non-Muslims.

As an administrator, Tipu had a passion to introduce reforms in every field he came into contact with. He was anxious to develop his foreign trade for which he sent missions abroad. He established a Board of Trade consisting of nine Commissioners to develop import and export trade both by land and sea. He re-defined the weights and measures, founded a new calendar, issued new coins, introduced several reforms and was harsh on corrupt officials. He re-organised his army and compiled a comprehensive code regarding the fighting methods, exercise and duties of the different grades of officers.

Tipu was an enlightened despot who loved learning and patronised the learned. He knew several languages himself, particularly Persian and maintained a grand library.

"His country", we may quote Diron, "was found everywhere full of inhabitants, and apparently cultivated to the utmost extent of which the soil was capable ; while the discipline and fidelity of his troops in the field, until their last overthrow, were testimonies equally strong, of the excellent regulations which existed in his army. His

1. Bowring, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-127.

2. *ibid.*, p. 197.

government, though strict and arbitrary, was the despotism of a politic and able sovereign."¹

But the more efficient and forward-looking an Indian prince was, the greater was the risk of arousing British jealousy and anxiousness to bring about his ruin. Probably this is what happened with Tipu-Sultan.

1. Diron, *A Narrative of the Campaigns in India*, p. 249, quoted by Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Sir John Shore 1793-1798

Son of Thomas Shore of Romford by his wife Dorothy, John Shore who later became Lord Teignmouth, was born on 8 October 1751 in St James's Street, London. He was educated at Harrow, learnt book-keeping at Hoxton, and was appointed as a writer in the East India Company in 1768. He landed in Bengal in 1769, the year when Vansittart appointed English supervisors in the districts to look after the collections of land revenue, and to collect information with regard to land, its fertility, ownership etc.

Clive had secured Dewani rights for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the homeless Mughal Emperor Shah Alam in 1765. These rights consisted of the powers to collect land revenue and administer civil justice. The East India Company had, however, as yet neither the will nor the means to exercise these powers hence they were delegated to or left in the hands of the puppet Nawab of Bengal, who would continue making the collections through his existing revenue machinery and remit the whole amount thus collected to the British Resident at Murshidabad after keeping a fixed annual sum to meet his own expenses. This system under which the British kept the final authority in their own hands, while transferring responsibility into the hands of the Nawab, was known as Dual Government of Clive.

As, however, the time passed, the British revenue demands increased, the ryots suffered, but the authorities at Calcutta believed that there still was a wide margin of land profits which the agriculturists enjoyed, and they also suspected the Nawab's officials of intercepting money. It is in these circumstances that the supervisors referred to above were appointed.

It was indeed a crucial time when Shore arrived in Bengal. By appointing supervisors the Company took its first step towards the final assumption of responsibility in Bengal, but it did not as yet understand the magnitude of the problem the supervisors were called

upon to tackle. It was not an easy job to ascertain as to who owned the land. There was the tiller of land who was called a ryot. Above him there was the zamindar and his agents. Some of these zamindars were the descendants of the officials who had been granted the right to collect revenue and keep it in lieu of a salary or pension. With the passage of time, these hereditary collectors of revenue had started considering themselves as the owners of land, while the tillers, the real owners, began to be considered only as tenants. There were other zamindars who originally were mere farmers of revenue which they collected in return only for a commission, but who with the passage of time had made this position hereditary and now considered themselves as the real proprietors. Some of the zamindars were the descendants of petty chieftains who paid tribute to the Emperor. Below these zamindars, again, there were people who enjoyed hereditary rights of sub-infeudation. Then there was the sub-sub-infeudation of different grades; the last, under the whole mass of parasites, being the poor tiller, oppressed and badly harassed.

The ryots for generations had considered the zamindars their real rulers and masters, and had now no courage to speak out the truth against them. Besides all these, there were the record-keepers, originally appointed to keep records of the quality of land, its ownership, rates and methods of the revenue assessment etc. These record-keepers, known as Qanungos, were meant basically to look after the interests of the real proprietors of the land, and keep a watch on the activities of the revenue collectors, the zamindars, etc. also now occupied a hereditary position. They considered the records as their private property, and in league with the zamindars, constituted themselves into another set of parasites who lived on the sweat and blood which the ryot gave to his land. They were also not willing to betray the zamindars, and part with the information which the British supervisors wanted to collect. Nor were their records now completely reliable, for much manipulation had taken place through generations of these ruffians; and it now needed a research spread over years to collect the facts for which the supervisors were sent to the districts. Little wonder, then instead of giving their attention to the almost impossible duties they were sent to perform, these supervisors immediately busied themselves in private trade and other means of making easy money and within a short time they became yet another set of parasites on the already impoverished and unfortunate land.

It is in these circumstances that Shore came to India. The problem of land revenue was the biggest problem that the Company at that time faced, and John Shore found himself immediately involved in this problem. In 1770 he was appointed Assistant to the Revenue Council at Murshidabad, in which position he settled revenue suits; and the chief and other members of the Council being idle or usually away on tours, he worked very hard and almost handled the

whole business. As such he soon began to be considered an authority over the revenue matters. He learnt Persian, the language in which most of the contemporary records of India were kept. In 1772 he was appointed Chief Assistant to the Resident at Rajshahi, and between 1775 and 1780 he worked successively as a member of the Revenue Council of Calcutta, and then as Revenue Commissioner at Dacca. In 1786 he left on leave for England where he married Charlotte Cornish, who belonged to a middle class family, her father being a doctor, and in 1786 he was appointed as a member of the Governor-General's Council in Bengal. In the same year Shore became also the President of the Board of Revenue at Calcutta, and as such founded one school of thought with regard to the system of the revenue settlement that the Company in Bengal should have; the other school of thought being founded by James Grant, the chief Sheristadar, or head of the records office, as we have already seen. Under Cornwallis John Shore had definite views as to with whom and for how long the revenue settlement should be made, and between James Grant and John Shore, Cornwallis was more inclined to accept the views of the latter and he introduced his Permanent Settlement of Land Revenue in Bengal in 1793.

In 1790 John Shore returned to England where he appeared as a witness to support Warren Hastings at his trial. He was created a baronet in 1792 and was appointed the Governor-General to succeed Lord Cornwallis in the following year in Bengal. As Governor-general, however, "he was not a character to arouse warmth of feeling: there was no strong love or hate, there was no passion in his life. He was fair, he was thorough, he was painstaking, he was temperate, he was honest."¹ And that is about all that can be said of him.

Shore was supposed to be a man of peace, or what was more strongly asserted, he was necessarily a weak man. The example of Tipu Sultan of Mysore is thus quoted. Tipu had been effectively humbled by Cornwallis in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. A far-sighted Governor-General should not have allowed him to recover his strength, contact Zaman Shah of Afganistan, send emissaries to other Muslim countries and seek active French help to strengthen himself to challenge the British. John Shore, however, suffered all this, till Tipu's power became formidable again, and Shore's successor Wellesley, had to fight the Fourth Mysore War to destroy the Sultan once for all.

In the time of John Shore, not only the British enemies resurrected themselves and created problems once again, the British

1. Woodruff, Philip, *op cit.*, *The Founders* p. 133.

friends also suffered from want of British support, and started losing faith in their willingness, or what is worse, in their capability to fulfil commitments and help in their times of distress. This thus happened in the case of the Nizam of Hyderabad, a dependable ally who had stood by the British more than any one else through thick and thin. In the time of Shore, hoards of Marathas attacked him; his requests for British help all went in vain. He was routed at Kharda and signed a humiliating treaty which dispossessed him of large chunks of territories. He lost faith in British friendship, started raising fresh troops and getting them disciplined by the French officers. Wellesley later on had to start all over again to bring the Nizam back under the British fold.

John Shore was different from those who immediately preceded him. He did not have the penetrating eye of Warren Hastings who even in the seventies of the Eighteenth Century would express concern at what was happening far away in the Punjab, where petty Sikh chiefs after parcelling out the whole of the province among themselves, were now cutting one another's throats. Hastings had apprehended that soon one of these chiefs would vanquish others and become a formidable power for others outside the province to reckon with. In the time of John Shore, Ranjit Singh, the chief of the Sukerchakia principality in the Punjab, actually entered into a career of raising the standard of monarchy all over the Punjab. But that was none of Shore's concern.

Shore had some queer ideas about the people over whom he ruled; and ridiculously enough, he once wrote: "The climate of Bengal is not favourable to Religion. It produces a languor, after long residence in India, which renders the faculties of the soul inert—and I have always observed that indifference is a worse foe to religion than Sin." And again, "Upon the whole, if we should confer happiness upon them, it will be in spite of themselves."¹

He was, however, honest to himself, and did not lack sympathy for the people. He thus wrote: "When I consider myself the Ruler of twenty-five million people,...I tremble at the greatness of the charge. I consider every native of India, whatever his situation may be, as having a claim upon me; and that I have not a right to dedicate an hour to amusement further than as it is conducive to health and so far to the despatch of business."²

Shore had a strong literary sense, considerably mastered the Persian language, and, "used his leisure to translate into English in three manuscript volumes a Persian form of the *Jog Bashist*, a

1. Quoted by Woodruff, Philip, *op. cit*, *The Founders*, pp. 133, 134.
2. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 149.
3. *ibid*, pp 147-48.

Sanskrit exposition of the doctrines of *Vedanta*. He constantly slipped into his correspondence verse translations from the Arabic or imitation of Horace..."³

Shore resigned his post of Governor-General in 1798, and retired to England where he was created "an Irish peer as Lord Teignmouth, though he never took his seat in the Irish House of Lords."¹ In 1807 he became a Privy Councillor and a member of the Board of Control for India. Religion was one of his principal interests, and in his later years he worked as the first President of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He died in London on 14 February 1834.

"Dull and Upright", as Viscount Mersey writes of him, "he was neither a great ruler nor a maker of history, but he fulfilled the need of the India Board for a sober and reliable administrator of their Asiatic territories, who would bring them peace and large dividends rather than war and large expenses."² Lord Wellesley, Shore's successor, however, had a somewhat sharper, or rather self-conceited, view regarding his methods. He wrote: "His low birth, vulgâr manners, and eastern habits, as well as his education in the Company's service, his natural shyness and awkwardness, added to indolence, timidity and bad health, contributed to relax every spring of this government from one extremity of the empire to the other; and at the seat of government established a systematic degradation of the person, dignity and authority of the Governor-General. This is the true character of the last government; never did there exist in India one more inefficient in its control over the subordinate presidencies, more careless or timid with respect to all our foreign relations, more incorrect and even partial with respect to the distribution of patronage nor (to complete the picture) one so little feared or respected by any branch of the civil or military service or by any description of natives or Europeans residing at the very seat of the supreme power."³

Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroy and Governors-General of India*, p. 28.

ibid, p. 29.

Historical MSS. Commission. Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Esq., at Drepmore, Vol. IV. p. 383-quoted by P.E. Roberts, *India Under Wellesley*, pp. 180-81.

Marquess of Wellesley 1798-1805

"The Wellesleys trace their descent from the de Wellesleighs, one of whom carried the standard for Henry II when he sailed for Ireland"¹ Born at Dangan Castle, County Meath on 20 June 1760 Richard Colley Wellesley was the eldest son of Garrett Wellesley, first Earl of Mornington, Baron Mornington and first Viscount Wellesley who came from a landed family of Ireland. His mother was the Hon. Anne Hill-Trevor, a daughter of Viscount Dungannon. The father died in 1781 when our hero was only twenty-one years old. But the mother lived till 1831 to see the glorious achievements of her son. After some preliminary schooling at Trim, at ten Richard was sent to Harrow where he got into some trouble and was sent away to Eton and then six years thereafter to Christ Church, Oxford where he won the Chancellor's Prize for Latin Verse. He however, never got a degree, and had to renounce studies after the death of his father when he succeeded as 2nd Earl of Mornington and began to look after his family.

Richard was very popular with women and settled down to a married life quite late. In the mean while he had a mistress, Gabrielle Roland who presented him with five children before the two were married. Soon after occupying a seat in the Irish House of Lords, he was elected to the English House of Commons in 1781. He, however, is said to have delivered his maiden speech only in 1786 while Hastings' Rohilla policy was being discussed. He occupied the office of Junior Lord of the Treasury, and then was made a member of the Board of Control, before he was appointed as Governor-General of India and landed at Calcutta in May 1798 to take charge of his office from Sir John Shore who succeeded Lord Cornwallis in 1793, but whose period of Governor-Generalship is comparatively unimportant.

INDIA AT THE TIME OF HIS ARRIVAL

When Wellesley arrived in India the direct British possessions

¹ Gilliat, Edward, *Heroes of Modern India* p. 67.

were confined to Bengal, Bombay and Madras which were separated by the intervening states of the Indian princes who were always at loggerheads with one another and with whose political activities the British could not remain unconcerned. The Pitt's India Act and the Charter Act of 1793 had given Bengal a measure of supremacy over the other two presidencies, but the self-contained political independence of Bombay and Madras had not yet been completely abolished.

Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor had been brought under the British protection in 1765, but in 1771 he had been lured away by Sindhia and Holkar who placed him on the throne of Delhi once again where he was blinded in 1788 by Ghulam Qadir, a Rohilla chief, when Sindhia withdrew his protection from Delhi temporarily due to his internal troubles. For a time Warren Hastings had completely broken away with the Emperor when he stopped paying tribute to him and took away the districts of Kora and Allahabad which had been ceded to him in 1765. The friendly relations were soon, however, restored, though when Wellesley arrived in India, the Maratha influence still predominated in Delhi.

Of the other Indian powers, the Marathas had extensive dominions and vast resources, but they presented a scene of indiscipline, anarchy, discord and mutual rivalries. Poona had been weakened as a result of the recent disputed succession to the office of Peshwa which was now occupied by Baji Rao II who had neither the talent nor the will to stem the rot that had set in the body-politic of the state. Sindhia, the overlord of Delhi, was busy augmenting his own power. His forces were being trained and disciplined by the French officers the most important of whom was Perron who had established an almost independent state of his own on the Jumna which was likely to be made use of by the Napoleonic government against the British. Holkar and Bhonsle were also potential enemies of the British with whom Wellesley had to deal.

In Mysore Tipu Sultan ruled. He had been much weakened as a result of the Third Mysore War which ended with the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792. But his ambitions had not yet been contained. He was trying to create misunderstandings between the British on the one hand, and their allies on the other. His contacts with Zaman Shah of Afghanistan and the embassy that he sent to Mauritius for an alliance with France against the British showed that another clash with him could not be postponed for long.

The Nizam had been defeated by the Marathas at Khorda and John Shore, the predecessor of Wellesley had not gone to his help despite his repeated requests. As a result he had turned to the French who raised an army of 14,000 trained in the European fashion, and whose existence in the Nizam's dominions could become a menace to the British particularly at a time when the hostilities between England and France in Europe were at their climax.

The Nawab of Oudh suffered under a heavy burden of the British financial demands. His internal administration was paralysed, while his nobles showed an inclination to mutiny. The private British merchants in Oudh who were under nobody's control, exploited the people and created problems of law and order.

The Nawab of Carnatic suffered under heavy debts. Power had long since passed out of his hands, but living in the suburbs of Madras he still exercised an influence which not only made the servants of the Company corrupt, but also rendered it difficult to introduce administrative reforms in his dominions. And of the other petty principalities, mention has also to be made of the Rajput states on the south-west of Delhi who clamoured for British protection against the Maratha depredations but they had not yet received proper attention of the British because of their policy of non-interference.

Externally, Napoleon was scheming for an overland invasion of India. The first coalition of England against France had failed; rebellious conditions prevailed in Ireland; there were naval mutinies and the financial crisis. All these made the very existence of the English problematical. Such were the circumstances when Wellesley came to India.

Generally, we may quote, V.A. Smith, at the time of Wellesley's appointment in India, a "change of political climate had occurred both in India and Europe. It was becoming clear that the Indian powers would not of themselves develop a pattern of power politics which would produce a balanced international system. A concert of Indian powers would never match the 18th century concert of Europe. Commerce demanded tranquillity for its conduct but the maintenance of permanent armament ate into profits. Those who had looked to balance began therefore to consider supremacy as the political aim of the British in India; and even within the Company itself there were those who defended a forward policy on the ground that it would be more economical in the long run. Even more marked was the change of climate with regard to Europe. The days were past when the French Revolution was believed to have heralded the beginning of a new era.... The British governing class was nervous with apprehension and tense with resolution. After the Italian campaign of 1796 no move by the French was incredible and every measure to forestall them welcome."¹

It is in this background that all the activities of Wellesley in India are to be examined. His relations with the Indian princes, and the measures he adopted against the French menace to India make an interesting study. Of the methods he employed to solve the intricate internal and external problems, the most important was his system

1. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 1961. pp. 550-51

of Subsidiary Alliances, the proper study of which is necessary for a student of History.

THE SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCE SYSTEM

The system of subsidiary alliances aimed at consolidating the British territories already acquired : at having a number of dependable allies who would form a sort of ring around the British territories which would not only keep out the external dangers at their cost but also offer additional opportunities for the development of the British trade and of compensating them against the losses suffered elsewhere ; and of taking necessary precautions against the French menace which threatened to destroy the British power in the east. It consisted of the following essential features.

The states which entered into Subsidiary Alliance with the British, (1) had to maintain a required number of British troops in their territories. These troops were to be commanded by the British officers, and their duty was to defend the state from any foreign aggression, as also to help it against an internal uprising. In order to meet the expense of these troops which were known as a subsidiary force, the protected state was to transfer part of its territories to the British, the revenues of which would be equivalent to the liability that they suffered. (2) The external relations of the protected state were to be in the control of the British without whose knowledge and permission the ruler would not have any outside political contact whatever. In the disputes between the protected states, the British were to act as arbitrators. (3) A protected state would not employ in its service any European except with the permission of the British. This provision was aimed against the employment of French troops by the Indian princes like the Nizam and Sindhia. These troops had to be disbanded. (4) In the court of each protected state a British Resident was to be appointed whose duty it was to see that the terms of the treaty were strictly adhered to by the princes and the obligations of the British were fulfilled.

If we examine the past history of the British in India, we shall find that Wellesley was not the founder of this system, though he did give it the finishing touch and brought about a general application of it. The origin of this system in fact was almost as old as the origin of the British political power itself. The first stage in the evolution of the system may thus be found in the British treaty with the Nizam in 1768 whereby the latter was to be helped with the British forces whenever he was in need of them. The second stage may be visible in the British treaty with the same prince signed in 1798 under which the Nizam was to keep a British subsidiary force of six battalions within his state, and permanently, for which he would pay at the rate of £ 241,710 per annum. The third stage which was put into general use by Wellesley, and which we have already discussed,

consisted of the essential feature that instead of paying the cost of the subsidiary force by a fixed annual amount the protected prince was to transfer some territories to the British, the revenues of which would meet the expense. The last stage is the contribution of Wellesley, though the traces of all these stages are available in the relations of Warren Hastings with Oudh about fifteen years before the arrival of the former.

Wellesley imposed this system on all the states which came under the British protection during his time, though there was a temporary exception of Sindhia, a treaty with whom, signed in 1804 provided that the subsidiary force instead of being placed within his territories, would be stationed on his frontiers and would be available for his service whenever he needed them.

The system of subsidiary alliances introduced by Wellesley had its advantages as well as disadvantages. Among the advantages one may count, one is the fact that the reckless mutual rivalries, bickerings and contests for power that existed among the Indian princes, were now brought to an end. Politics in the protected states was stabilised. There would be no more wars on flimsy grounds, external dangers almost came to an end, and the disposal of the mutual disputes of the protected states became easier. Secondly, the British gained by the fact that in future whenever they would have to fight against their enemies, they would do so in the protected states and save their own territories from the ravages of war. Thirdly, the military frontiers of the British were tossed forward. There was no guarantee that the subsidiary forces would be employed only for the protection of the princes who paid for them, and not for snatching away their own independence as was done in several cases in the time of Lord Dalhousie. When the military frontiers had expanded, it was not difficult to make the political frontiers to coincide with them. The expansion of the British empire became easier. Fourthly, the system having brought about tranquillity in the protected states which surrounded the British possessions themselves, trade began to develop not only in the British dominions, but in the protected states as well, whose wealth and resources were now reserved for the exploitation of the British alone. All other European powers were effectually and permanently excluded. Fifthly, without any expense to them, the British now kept a large number of troops which could be employed anywhere and against anybody. Wellesley himself said : "By the establishment of our subsidiary forces at Hyderabad, and Poona, with the Gaikwad, Daulat Rao Sindhia and the Rana of Gohad, an efficient army of 22,000 men is stationed within the territories, or on the frontier of foreign states, and is paid by foreign subsidies. That army is constantly maintained in a state of perfect equipment, and is prepared for active service in any direction at the shortest notice. This force may be directed against any of the principal states of India, without the hazard of disturbing the tranquillity of

the company's possessions, and without military expenses of the Government of India."¹

Then, the protected states being completely under the British control, they were now as good as a part of the British empire itself which so easily expanded without giving a chance to the other European powers to become jealous.

Last but not least, the one aim of the British in India was to establish a monopoly of British influence to the exclusion of all other European powers. None else succeeded so well in the achievement of this aim as Wellesley did. The existing French troops in the protected states were disbanded. No Frenchman could be employed anywhere in them, and the chances of any Napoleonic forces being helped in India in their march against the British, were reduced to the minimum.

Among the disadvantages of the system, one, the states which fell under it had to pay subsidies far out of proportion to their total revenues, with the result that the most productive of their territories were taken away, and those which remained with them could not bear even their own burden. The people were taxed heavily, but there was none to whom they could make a plaint. Second, the protected princes had to suffer from the fear neither of external aggression nor of internal uprising. In these circumstances they became lax in their administrative duties and fell an easy prey to an immoral and luxurious life while the people chafed under lawlessness that raged over the length and breadth of the states giving an excuse to the British to intervene and make direct annexations as Dalhousie did.

Third, the defence responsibility having passed out into the hands of the British, the people in the states lost all opportunities of employment in the army, while those who previously commanded the troops and planned aggression or a self-defence, lost all initiative and the opportunities of developing self-reliance, confidence and courage. For everything now they looked to the British, their masters, whose whisper was their thunder.

The system, fourthly, also aroused the jealousy of those who remained outside of it, and convinced them of the selfish character of the British as, for instance, the subsidiary alliance with Baji Rao II did. It was this alliance which brought about the second Maratha war and disasters for the British which led ultimately to Wellesley's recall.

The Subsidiary System has been compared to the *Chauth* system of the Marathas under which they collected one-fourth of the

1, Quoted by Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

total produce from the neighbouring states in return for protection they guaranteed against their own depredations and against external invasions. It is also sometimes considered on the same lines as the *Rakhi* system of the Sikhs which they imposed upon the people in Punjab when the Mughal administration had declined and the external invasions of the Afghans and the Marathas rendered the people completely defenceless, at the mercy of the reckless plunderers. The Sikhs collected one-fifth of the value of the produce of the land. Those who paid were divided into sixty-four principalities of the Sikhs, which later on merged into twelve. Of these twelve, one, the Sukerchakia principality became supreme and Ranjit Singh established in Punjab a kingdom.

The Subsidiary System, however, differs from the *Chauth* and the *Rakhi* in the fact that in the latter two no troops were permanently stationed within a protected state, and no productive territories were claimed for good. And it is precisely these two things which made the former severe and more exacting.

RELATIONS WITH THE INDIAN STATES

Oudh

It remains now to discuss Wellesley's relations with the individual states and how he applied his system to them. Of these the history of Oudh is interesting.

We have already examined the British relations with Oudh from 1765 when the Treaty of Allahabad was signed, to the end of the administration of Hastings.¹ When Cornwallis took over as the Governor-General of Bengal, the Nawab maintained two brigades in his territories, one, the permanent brigade at Kanpur, and second, the temporary one at Fatehpur. He had already made a demand on Hastings that all troops with the exception of the permanent brigade should be withdrawn from Oudh, as he was incapable of meeting their expense. This had not however yet been done, though agreed to in the Treaty of Chunar, 1781,² and he repeated his demand in the time of Cornwallis who instead of acceding to the demand, reduced the subsidies from seventy-five lakh rupees to fifty lakhs.

In 1797 there was a disputed succession, Sir John Shore placed Sadat Ali on the throne in return for a new treaty under which the new Nawab agreed that (1) the Company would take up the whole defence of his state in return for which the subsidy was now raised to seventy-six lakh rupees. It was laid down in the treaty that this subsidy would not in future be enhanced, except in case of necessity,³

1. See Warren Hastings.

2. Ahmad Safi, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.

3. Which means any future enhancement would be only temporary.

of which Governor-General was to be the judge. (2) The fort of Allahabad was surrendered to the British and (3) the latter agreed not to interfere in the Nawab's household affairs and his internal problems.

The subsidy now imposed upon the Nawab was heavy, yet he remained punctual in its payments. His country was plagued by unscrupulous and greedy adventurers, and his administration was "corrupted by the vices alike of East and West...Honest commerce had slender sustenance where the leeches had fixed their hold,"¹ yet he himself remained perfectly loyal to the British. All this, however, could not save him from further exploitation when Wellesley came to India. Tipu Sultan was in contact with Zaman Shah of Afghanistan, and in 1798 there was supposed to be the danger of the latter marching into India. This was a sufficient excuse for Wellesley to demand that the number of the British troops in Oudh should be further increased² and the subsidy enhanced to 126 lakh rupees to meet their expense. The demand was exorbitant which the Nawab expressed his inability to meet. He rather offered to abdicate. Wellesley jumped at the idea, but differences developed on the question of succession. While the Nawab had offered to abdicate in favour of one of his sons, Wellesley insisted that the sons should be mentioned to the extent only of making for them a suitable provision, and not beyond. The Nawab withdrew his offer to abdicate which made Wellesley furious, and he simply ordered the additional forces to march into Oudh, asking the Nawab to make a suitable provision for them. In vain did the Nawab insist that the treaty forbade the enhancement of the subsidy, and that if he disbanded his own troops to meet the expense of the British forces, the collection of revenues would become difficult, and the disbanded soldiers would create a law and order problem. He had ultimately to yield.

Wellesley, however, was still not satisfied, and in 1801 he asserted that the circumstances had now changed, and the Nawab must select one of the two alternatives i.e. to transfer some of his territories to the British from the revenues of which the British themselves would meet the expense of their troops in Oudh ; or to surrender the whole of his dominions and be satisfied with titles and pension to be granted to him and his descendants in perpetuity. The Nawab rejected the second alternative, but with regard to the first he insisted that there was no justification. He had regularly paid his subsidy and there were no arrears. But the Nawab's objections were of no avail. The Resident in Oudh was ordered to take possession of the territories, if necessary by force, and the Nawab bowed.

Under the new treaty signed on 10 November, 1801 (1) the Nawab ceded to the British the productive lands of Rohilkhand and

1. Hutton, W.H., *The Marquess Wellesley* 1893, p. 67.

2. The story is interesting, see Ahmed Safi, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-48.

the Lower Doab. (2) In the remaining parts of his dominions, the British could station their forces wherever they liked. (3) The Nawab's own troops were reduced in their number, and were to be used only for the necessary purposes of the state and (4) the British could frame regulations for the guidance of police to maintain law and order in the Nawab's dominions.

As a result of the new treaty the Nawab's remaining territories now were surrounded by the British on all sides, except on the north where Nepal lay. The British came into direct territorial contact with Sindhia, and the old policy of keeping Oudh a buffer state was renounced. The British had now the power to interfere in his internal affairs, expense of large a part of the Bengal army was imposed on him, and his own military strength was sharply curtailed. Wellesley's policy towards Oudh obviously was based on the principle of 'might is right'.

The territories which were acquired from the Nawab, were placed under a Board of Commissioners, headed by a Lieutenant-Governor, Henry Wellesley—a brother of Lord Wellesley himself. The Directors in England felt jealous at their privilege of making such appointments being usurped. Though Henry soon after resigned, the matter was discussed in the Parliament, and a violent denunciation was made of fraud and oppression perpetrated against the Nawab. After his return to England in 1805, even charges were formulated against Lord Wellesley in the Commons, though the division took place only in 1808 when the House passed a vote of thanks, appreciating generally the services of Lord Wellesley in a situation beset with serious difficulties.

The Nawab of Carnatic

The Nawab of Carnatic, sometimes also called the Nawab of Arcot (his capital), had long since renounced his capital when Wellesley arrived in India, and he was now living in the suburb of Madras where he had a magnificent palace and an affluent life costing him heavy debts the story of which, again is interesting. The Nawab had contracted these debts from the servants of the Company against assignments of land revenue of different parts of his country, at exorbitant rates of interest, with the result that the total interest charges on the principal he borrowed reached at a time the high figure of £ 623,000 per annum, and this figure was more than double the total annual dividend of the Company itself. The servants of the Company who gave loans to the Nawab became extremely rich, an example of which may be found in one Paul Benfield who with the wealth thus collected, not only himself won a seat in the British Parliament, but sent as many as nine others also to the House of Commons through rotten boroughs which he had acquired. Enquiries were held and the Pitt's India Act forbade the servants of the

Company from entering into such transactions with the country powers. But the evil still continued, giving an example not only of the utter exploitation of the Indian resources by the English Nabobs, but also of the worthless character of the Indian rulers themselves who clung like a parasite to the tillers of the soil who suffered under the yoke of a ruthless, lawless and anarchic administration.

Mohammad Ali, the old Nawab of Carnatic, died in 1795 and was succeeded by Umdut-ul-Umra on whom the British tried to impose a modified treaty under which he was to cede some of his territories to the British which he had already pledged to them against certain payments due from him. Umdut-ul-Umra resisted. The Nawabs of Arcot were a festering sore the removal of which should have made no one feel sorry, and Wellesley determined on the action. But instead of proceeding straight on the arguments of corruption and inefficiency, the Governor-General brought forward certain charges of treachery both against the late Mohammad Ali and Umdut, which were not proved, but on the basis of which the present Nawab was removed. The action of Wellesley has earned him the criticism of the historians where he deserved an appreciation.

The charges of treachery consisted in the fact that certain documents were found in Seringapatam which proved both Mohammad Ali and Umdut to have been in seditious correspondence with Tipu. The discussion on the matter was still going on when Umdut died on 15 July 1801, and on the same day Wellesley placed his proposal before his son Ali Hussain that he should retire with a liberal pension and nominal titles, leaving the administration of the state to the British. Ali Hussain refused to accept the proposal with the result that his accession was not recognised, and the late Nawab's nephew Azim-ud-Daula was picked up instead, who had everything to gain, and nothing to lose by accepting the British proposals.

A fresh treaty was thus signed with Azim on 25 July 1801, under which the whole military and civil administration of the state lapsed to the British, while the Nawab was guaranteed for himself and for his descendants in perpetuity, the payment of one-fifth of the total revenues of his dominions.

The criticism of Wellesley's policy is based on the arguments that the charges levelled against Mohammad Ali and Umdut were not proved; and that even if these two persons were indulging in sedition, there was no reason why Ali Hussain who was reputed for his talent and efficiency should have been robbed of his inheritance.

Tanjore

The principality of Tanjore had been under the British territorial guarantee since 1762. In 1773 the Raja of Tanjore was deposed by

the Governor of Madras on grounds which were not found reasonable by the Directors, and the Raja was reinstated on his throne in 1776. In 1786 the Raja died, and the succession was contested between his adopted son, Serfogi and his half-brother Amir Singh. The Madras government accepted the claims of the latter, but he did not prove an efficient ruler, with the result that the Directors ordered that he should be replaced by Serfogi. Before, however, this was done, Wellesley appeared. He decided to sweep away an institution which had outlived its purpose, and an agreement was given on 25 October 1799, to Serfogi to sign, under which the latter accepted an annual pension of four lakh rupees, and surrendered the whole civil and military administration to the state of the British.

Surat

The Nawab of Surat, which had been the earliest permanent settlement of the British in India, had surrendered his defence to the Company in 1759, retaining to himself the civil administration. The payments due to the British, however, were not being duly made, and it was proposed in 1790 that the Nawab having died, his administration should be assumed by the Company, with the approval of the Emperor. Cornwallis, however, did not agree. The next Nawab died in 1799 which gave one more opportunity to Wellesley to abolish the order. The late Nawab's brother who was the indisputable claimant to the throne, was given a new agreement to sign under which he accepted an annual pension of one lakh rupees plus one-fifth of the surplus of his total revenues after the defence charges of the Company were met. The whole civil and military administration lapsed to the British.

The Nizam of Hyderabad

We have examined in our earlier chapters the founding of the state of Hyderabad, and its role in the Anglo-French rivalry in the Deccan. The Nizam, the ruler of Hyderabad, had been friends with the British since 1768, though he never became their dependent like Oudh or Carnatic because of the distance that separated his state from the British territories. Yet he had been a constant prey to the territorial designs of Mysore and the Marathas against whom the British alone could save him. The British did not always favourably respond to his requirements with the result that the friendship often cooled though it never completely broke.

In 1795, as we have already seen, all the Marathas combined against the Nizam to claim arrears of their *chauth* and gave him a crushing defeat at Kharda, though the sting of this defeat was later on taken out when Baji Rao II came to power and in return for the support he got from the Nizam, he returned to him almost all the gains which the Marathas had made. When in 1795 the Nizam had

been attacked by the Marathas, he approached the British, under the terms of his existing treaty with them, to come to his help, but Sir John Shore who was then in power, was a supporter of the policy of non-interference, and the Nizam was betrayed. The Nizam in these circumstances was compelled to turn to the French, whom he employed in his service, and by the time Wellesley came to India, he had 14,000 soldiers trained and commanded by the French officers, the most important of whom was Francois Raymond who was well known for his anti-British feelings. Luckily for the British he died in 1798 and was succeeded by Piron.¹

The French danger in Hyderabad against the British was real, particularly because in lieu of their salaries the Nizam had started making territorial assignments to his French officers which could easily develop into centres of intensive activities against the British. Wellesley was determined to root out this influence from Hyderabad, and he was lucky in the fact that the Nizam also had been getting disillusioned with the French due to their arrogance. His minister, Mir Alam was a staunch supporter of the British; and the recent help given to the Nizam by the British against his rebellious son Ali Jah who with the support of Tipu had threatened to overthrow his father, had negated to some extent the evil effects of John Shore's earlier policy of non-interference.

Wellesley approached the Nizam for a subsidiary alliance in 1798, under which all the French troops of Hyderabad were disbanded, and he accepted a subsidiary force of six battalions for which he was to pay annually an amount of £ 2,41,710. After the overthrow of Tipu, the British relations with the Nizam were further cemented, and the scope of the treaty of 1798 was extended. Under the new treaty signed in 1800, which was the true subsidiary treaty of Wellesley, the subsidiary force in the Nizam's dominions was further increased, but in lieu of cash payments to meet its expense, he now surrendered to the British all his share of the Mysore territories which he had acquired after the third and the fourth Mysore Wars. He was now to be protected by the British from a foreign invasion from any quarter and his foreign policy fell under the control of the Company.

The Nizam's dominions were thus made safe, and they continued as such so long as the British remained in India. The Nizam did not grudge in surrendering his territories to the British as much as the Nawab of Oudh had when he gave away Rohilkhand to Wellesley. The reason is said to be that the territories he surrendered were not really his own. They were the territories of Mysore which he had not yet fully assimilated and which he was not therefore very sorry to part with.

The gains of the British on the other hand were also great.

Not Perron, the famous general of Sindhia.

Besides the benefits of the system of Subsidiary Alliances which accrued to them as a natural course, with one stroke of the pen Wellesley was able to conquer an army of 14,000 soldiers and dislodge the French from a position in Hyderabad which at any time could have become formidable. Besides, the territories that he now acquired from the Nizam, extended the British frontiers so as to surround the state of Mysore from all sides. The state of Hyderabad itself never so strong, now sank to the position of servile feudatory. "Its importance was trivial in the extreme, and its independence completely fictitious, in the half century before the mutiny, and perhaps most of all in Lord Wellesley's time. No one deviated from an attitude of steady contempt for it."¹

THE SECOND ANGLO-MARATHA WAR

The circumstances

Divisions and discord which had become a part of Maratha life before the arrival of Wellesley in 1798 had ebbed for a while in 1795 when almost all of them combined to march against the Nizam to recover arrears of *chauth*. The Nizam had requested the British for help, but Sir John Shore, the Governor-General was afraid of offending Nana lest he should join hands with Tipu once again against the British. So he declined, with the result that the Nizam was completely routed at Kharda and signed a humiliating treaty with the Marathas under which he surrendered considerable territories to them, besides agreeing to make heavy financial payments. Nana's prestige was considerably enhanced, and it seemed the Marathas had started learning the lesson of unity. But this combination proved to be the last and, soon changes took place which robbed Poona of the fruits of their victory recently achieved.

Peshwa Madhav Rao Narain who had suffered too long under the galling tutelage of Nana, fell from a housetop in Poona on 27 October 1795 and died. He was said to have committed suicide. This unfortunate incidence plunged Poona into a network of intrigues and counter-intrigues with regard to succession. In the normal course of events, Savai Madhav Rao having died childless, one of his two cousins Baji Rao II and his brother Chimnaji, should have succeeded. But the record of their late father Raghoba and the recent plots of Baji Rao II to gain power stood against them. There was a proposal that Savai Madhav's widow Yasodabai should adopt a son, and as many as ten children, and even a brother-in-law of Nana were considered for the purpose. In the midst of such hostile activities Baji Rao made high promises of rewards to Sindhia, and won over even Nana, Holkar and Bhonsle to his side, and after a temporary set back from June to November 1796 when his brother Chimnaji

1. Thompson, Edward, *The Making of the Indian Princes*, 1943, p. 16.

Appa was appointed Peshwa, he had a success. During this time he even appealed to the Nizam for help. The Nizam agreed to recognise his claims and in return for that all the territories he had ceded to the Marathas were returned, and the balance of payments due from him was also remitted.

Baji Rao II, whom P.E. Roberts calls "the most worthless the wickedest and the falsest of the Peshwas"¹ was jealous of Nana and depended entirely on Daulat Rao Sindhia who himself was a man only of worthless character. Sindhia's troops were in arrears of pay, he constantly pressed Baji Rao for money, and the latter to meet his demands resorted to all sorts of legitimate and illegitimate means which Nana did not like. A plot was hatched out, and Nana who was invited to a conference by Baji Rao and Sindhia, was arrested and sent away by the latter a prisoner to Ahmadnagar. Thereafter full vent was given to Sindhia's rapacity, and under his instructions a reign of terror was let loose in Poona for the collection of funds. Friendship between him and the Peshwa could not in these circumstances last long and when Sindhia learnt of Baji Rao's designs against him, he resorted to the only means available to counteract his measures and freed Nana from his captivity. Safety of Baji Rao in these circumstances lay only in inviting Nana to take charge of the administration once again. Thus towards the close of 1798, Nana was once again at the helm of affairs where he remained till 13 March 1800 when he died, taking away with him, as the British Resident reported, "all the wisdom and moderation of the Government".

Before proceeding with the main current of the events which brought about the second Maratha war, we may say a few words regarding this man about whom the views of the historians are varied. Hostile writers have stigmatised Nana "as a usurper, but admit that his own people placed him in power. Some have denounced him as a despot as inexorable as Nero, while admitting that he won the admiration of his people. Others depict him as a satan while confessing that he was in almost every dealing moderate and imploring peace. Critics are not wanting who condemn him for his insatiable lust for power which led him to trample remorselessly not only the rights of his contemporaries but also his own master, Baji Rao II. But it is admitted at the same time that the whole country was astonished by his astuteness, political foresight and moderation."

It was Nana's genius which saved Madhav Rao II from the intriguing Raghoba and later on saved the Maratha power itself from extinction during the First Anglo-Maratha War. Had Sindhia

1. Roberts, P.E., *India Under Wellesley*, Gorakhpur, 1961, p. 26.
2. See Guota, *Pratut Chandra, Baji Rao II and the East India Company*, Bombay 1964, p. 21.
3. Deodhar, *op cit.*, p. 205.

only worked under his instructions instead of entering into a contest for power, the Treaty of Salbai should have brought greater gains to the Marathas. The self-centred activities of Baji Rao II brought about the loss of what Nana had gained from the Nizam in 1795, and it was the genius of this Peshwa which brought about a chaos in Poona where Nana had worked for years to establish discipline. It was in the midst of this chaos that Nana died bewailing the fortunes of the Marathas that he saw sinking before his eyes.

The death of Nana was a signal for all the forces of destruction to wreak their fury on the Maratha dominions. Sindhia was now all powerful, and as soon as Nana died, he took possession of his jagirs on the plea that he owed him one crore rupees. Amrit Rao, a nominee of his was appointed in the place of Nana. Baji Rao started quarrelling with the old chiefs to dispossess them of all their wealth. This was to give vent to his own policy of vengeance, as also to satisfy the increasing demands of Sindhia. In north Jaswant Rao Holkar was devastating Sindia's lands for the protection of which the latter marched out of Poona. In his absence Baji Rao, giving free rein to his passions, perpetrated a series of atrocious cruelties in Poona which alienated his subjects and brought upon his head the implacable wrath of the savage Jaswant Rao. Among those whom he barbarously murdered in 1801 was Jaswant Rao's brother, Vitthaji and it was to avenge this crime that Jaswant Rao invaded the Deccan in the following year."

Jaswant Rao marched against Poona and on 25 October 1802, he defeated both Sindhia and Baji Rao at Hadapsar, near that city. As the tide turned against the Peshwa he retired from the city spending a night at Wadgaon from where he fled to Bassein whence he appealed to the British for help. On 31 December a 'general defensive alliance' was signed between the Bombay Government and the Peshwa which is known as the Treaty of Bassein.

Treaty of Bassein

Under this treaty (1) the British were to station at least six battalions in the Peshwa's dominions as a subsidiary force, (2) the Peshwa ceded some territories in perpetuity to the Company yielding an annual revenue of 26 lakh rupees for the payment of these troops, (3) he would not in future enter into warfare against the Nizam or the Gaikwad, nor demand *chauth* from the former, and would accept the Company's arbitration in his disputes with these two chiefs (4) he would not keep in his appointment Europeans of a nation hostile to the British, (5) would relinquish his claims on Surat against which he would be compensated from his ceded territories, (6) and he would engage "neither to commence nor to pursue in future any negotiations with any power whatever without giving previous notice

and entering into mutual consultation with the Hon'ble East India Company's Government."¹

Thus Baji Rao sold away his independence into the hands of the Company. General Arthur Wellesley marched with him to Poona, Holkar retired to Malwa, and on 18 May 1803 he found himself on the throne of Peshwa once again. "Sindhia would dominate no longer, nor would Holkar march again to Poona, but at the same time, he had lost his hold on the army and the foreign policy of his state. The new Peshwa, directed by British opinion and backed by British bayonets, presented a sight hitherto unknown. He had secured what he wanted, freedom from his own chieftains, but at what price he had yet to discover."² The catastrophe which Nana dreaded, and had prevented so long, at last enveloped Poona. British hand was on their neck, before long the spirit that sustained the Maratha ambition for Hindu raj, would exist no more.

Wellesley's policy of approving the signing of this treaty was criticised, among others, by Castlereagh, the successor, in May 1801, by Dundas the President of the Board of Control. The Marathas, he said, "have hitherto respected our territory"; they "have never in any instance commenced hostilities against us. When by taking part in their internal disputes we have been at war with any of the Maratha states, they have always availed themselves of the first opening for peace, and have shown forbearance and humanity to a British army, more than once, when in difficulty." The treaty was an unnecessary interference into their internal affairs.

The treaty was against the spirit of the Pitt's India Act which forbade the Company from guaranteeing the territories of any state, unless that state bound itself at the same time to help it in a war already being fought or about to be declared.

It was an attempt to prop up a weak and worthless man who had destroyed peace in Poona within a short time of his coming to power. The people in Poona were against his coming back, but the British imposed him on them.

Wellesley should have foreseen that the reinstatement of Baji Rao with the help of the British would arouse the indignation of the Maratha chiefs who were bound to come together on a common cause of defeating the British designs of imposing slavery on the whole Maratha nation. The responsibility for bringing about the second Maratha War entirely rested on the English.

If instead of interfering into the Maratha affairs, the British should have just received the Peshwa kindly and kept their troops

1. Aitchison, C.U., *Treaties, Engagement and Sanads*, Calcutta, 1876, pp. 57-8.

2. Gupta, P.L., *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.

ready on the Maratha borders, the other Maratha chiefs would have vied with each other to win their friendship, and then they could have played their role of peace-makers and develop influence with them without having had to fight.

The British control on the Peshwa's foreign policy was bound to involve them into endless complications. The Maratha dominions were vast, and their problems exceedingly intricate. They had never-ending internal disputes, and no discipline in their mutual relations. The treaty would only bring hornet's nest about their ears.

Nor could the treaty be justified on account of any danger of French Maratha alliance. The French influence had already been removed from Mysore and Hyderabad, and there was no danger of its lodgement among the Marathas, as Castlereagh believed. He said "the British power in India is too firmly consolidated and the prospect of attack from any quarter too remote, to justify us in prudence in risking a war, with a view of providing against a danger merely speculative."¹

The defence of Wellesley on the other hand lay in the fact that the coming of Baji Rao under the wings of the British offered them one more opportunity of accomplishing what they failed to do by extending their protection to Raghoba. If a British nominee could now be placed on the throne of Peshwa, the losses suffered during the First Anglo-Maratha war would be avenged.

The Nizam had been brought under the British protection in 1800 with the result that the Marathas stopped claiming *chauth* from him. These claims, however, were never likely to be renounced for ever, and the war with the Marathas, at any rate, was inevitable.

Merely collecting army on the Maratha frontiers should have served no purpose, for a defensive policy never paid in India. The British control of the Peshwa's foreign policy instead of creating any complications, would rather have removed them. For under the British supervision the wars on flimsy grounds and for selfish purposes would no more be fought, and the British would no more be required to keep a constant watch from outside, on the events from the effects of which they could never escape.

Nor could the French peril yet be underrated. It was becoming a habit with the Maratha chiefs to get their troops trained by the French officers. If this was not immediately stopped, it was sure in future to create complications.

Be that as it may, the treaty of Bassein opened a new chapter

1. Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, V. pp. 312-18; quoted by Roberts, P.F., *op. cit.*, pp. 195-99.

in the history of India. By putting their own man on the throne of Poona, the British entered into the Maratha politics in a big way. And this was a mire from which the more they tried to extricate themselves, the deeper they went. The Peshwa humiliated the whole Maratha nation by trying to rule over them with the help of the British, with the result that it opened the way for a clash from which neither party could come out before one or the other was completely victorious. It was this treaty which started the Second Maratha War, and founded the revolution which Lord Hastings consummated in 1818.

The War

As the Treaty of Bassein was signed and Peshwa restored to his office, he sent his agents to Sindhia and Bhonsle to explain the whole matter. Sindhia, however, crossed the Narbada, declined the British offer to sign a similar treaty with him, and rather protested that he had not been consulted as the guarantor of the Treaty of Salbai. Bhonsle marched westward and met Sindhia near Adjunta-Ghat on 3 June 1803. British feared an attack and asked them both to separate and recross the Narbada which they refused, and condemned the Peshwa also for having not consulted them before the treaty. The position in which Sindhia at this time lay, made it convenient for him to march either on Poona, or to attack Hyderabad. The British had, therefore, to declare war which began on 3 August 1803.

Holkar had withdrawn to Malwa and was probably determined to see the humiliation of his Maratha enemies. The war aims and plan drawn up by Lord Wellesley therefore, carefully left him alone. Otherwise, the plan drawn up consisted of the aim (1) of destroying the French state which Monsieur Perron, a French General of Sindhia, had set up on the banks of the Jumna with the territories assigned to him. It may be noted that Sindhia's prolonged stay in the south had resulted into all administrative powers of his territories in the north passing into the hands of this General who also received tributes from the Rajput state of Jaipur and Jodhpur, enjoyed the privilege of coining money, had the Mughal Emperor under his protection and the forts of Delhi and Agra in his possession. He was considered almost a sovereign authority, and enjoyed annual revenue of about two crore rupees. One of his officers had occupied some territories in the Punjab where the British had not as yet appeared. Obviously this was a dangerous situation for the British who were always afraid of the Napoleonic government using Perron's position against them.

The other aims were : (2) to extend the British frontiers upto the Jumna, establish their hold on Delhi and Agra and bring Shah Alam under their own protection; (3) to annex Bundelkhand and establish contact with the Sikhs; and (4) to bring the Rajput states in the south-west of the Jumna under treaty engagements with them. In the north, Lord Lake was to be in charge of the war operations ; in the south Arthur Wellesley was to deal with Sindhia and Bhonsle ; in the west Colonel Murray was to capture Sindhia's territories in Gujarat and

protect Gaikwad at Baroda ; while in the east Bhonsle's territories of Balasore and Cuttack in Orissa were to be captured to help the Company establish direct territorial contact between Bengal and Madras.

Arthur Wellesley won several actions in the south and forced the Treaty of Deogaon on Bhonsle, the Raja of Berar, in December 1803, under which the Raja (1) entered into subsidiary alliance with the British, (2) ceded Cuttack and Balasore together with some other territories to them, and (3) agreed to accept the mediation of the Company in all his disputes with the Peshwa and the Nizam.

On 29 December, Sindhia also was forced to accept the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon under which (1) he agreed in future not to engage in his service the Europeans belonging to countries hostile to the British, (2) transferred his protection of the Mughal Emperor to the British, (3) ceded all his territories between the Ganges and the Jumna to them, and exchanged several other territories with those like Asirgarh and Burhanpur, and (4) confirmed the engagements that the British had entered into with some of his former feudatories. In February, the following year, Sindhia also entered into a subsidiary alliance with the British under which he was given an especially advantageous position, for instead of accepting the subsidiary force to be stationed within his territories at his own cost, the British agreed to keep such force only on the frontiers and at their own cost, but to be available for help to Sindhia at any time. The British agreed to meet the cost from the revenue of the territories already ceded to them under the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon.

In the north, General Lake also secured similarly striking results. General Perron was forced to retire from the service of Sindhia. He requested for safe conduct which was given.¹ His successor, Bourquin was defeated near Delhi on 11 September 1803, from where Lake marched to Mathura, signed a treaty with the Raja of Bharatpur in 9 October, and occupied Agra on the 18th. On 1 November, the remaining forces of Sindhia were defeated at Laswari in the Alwar state.

On the other hand, in the east, the port of Juggernaut was occupied in September, Cuttack fell in October, and thereafter the resistance came to an end. In the west, Broach fell in August, and before September was out, all the possession of Sindhia in Gujarat were with the British.

Some of the territories occupied by the British were divided between the Nizam and the Peshwa and the British protection was extended over the Rajput states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Macheri and Bundi, over the Jat Raja of Bharatpur and over Ambaji Rao Ingolia and the Rana of Gohad with all of whom the British signed treaties. The

1. Thus Perron betrayed Sindhia carrying away his diamonds and cash worth millions to Europe, proving that it was useless for the Indians to rely on the fidelity of the French officers.

British protection was to be at the cost of the states themselves but non-interference in the internal affairs was assured.

Wellesley said : "With all the sanguine temper of mind I declare that I could not have hoped for a completion of my plans at once so rapid and so secure."¹ In fact Sindhia had already been weakened in his clashes with Holkar ; the British were superior in their military training and discipline, while the Marathas were comparatively new to the art of pitched battles. Thirdly, the tact and speed with which Lake and Arthur Wellesley proceeded and which did not give the enemy a chance to think and plan, also were responsible for their success ; fourthly the guerrilla art in which the Marathas were adept, was not used; while, fifthly the mercenary soldiers recruited from Rohilkhand and Oudh etc., could not make a common cause with the Marathas who knew only how to plunder about, and not how to give disciplined administration.

Sindhia and Bhonsle were thus defeated, but the Second Maratha War had yet not been won. Holkar who had remained aloof was expected to accept peace after the other Maratha chiefs had been vanquished, but instead of being reasonable he demanded (1) certain territories such as Etawah which he claimed formerly to belong to his family as its ancient possessions ; (2) the permission to levy *chauth* and (3) a treaty like that signed with Sindhia under which the British forces were to remain at his frontiers to help him at their own cost. Wellesley was convinced that nothing short of war would bring Holkar round, so hostilities against him were declared on 16 April 1804.

A plan was carefully drawn up once again under which Arthur Wellesley was to march from the Deccan. General Lake from the north and Colonel Murray from Gujarat to surround Holkar from all the sides. This time, however, the British could not get a success. For Colonel Monson and Colonel Murray failed to execute their part of the plan, and the former was given a crushing defeat by Holkar in the Mukund Dara Pass, about thirty miles to the south of Kotah. Murray marching from Gujarat failed to effect junction with him, and Monson not daring to meet Holkar again, retreated in August to Agra in a disorderly manner, for some of his officers were supposed to be in treacherous correspondence with Holkar, desertions started and his ranks were thinned. This encouraged the Jat Raja of Bharatpur to renounce his friendship with the British and join Holkar in an attack on Delhi. Ochterlony, however, foiled their plan, and later on, in November, Lake was able to defeat Holkar at Dig and Farrukhabad. Early in 1805, however, Lake committed a 'ghastly military blunder of flinging four successive storming parties upon the ramparts of Bharatpur before his artillery had effected a breach.' He thus

1. Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, III p. 420, quoted by Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

failed to take the fortress and was obliged to conclude peace with the Raja leaving him to retain the fortress.

The failure at Bharatpur might have been repaired. But "the home authorities had long been dreading even a continuation of Wellesley's successes, and the first indications of failure were seized upon by them as a reason for his recall."¹ About 67-year old Lord Cornwallis was picked up once again to go to India and establish peace. Cornwallis, however, soon died in India, and was succeeded by Barlow who carried on the new policy of the Directors, the policy of making peace, of non-interference in the affairs of the Indian states, and of going back as far as possible to the conditions existing at the time of Wellesley's arrival in India.

The new policy started by the Company, was the policy of weak conciliation under which (1) the British protection over the Rajput states was withdrawn ; (2) Gwalior, Gohad and other territories were restored to Sindhia and (3) Holkar who was now almost homeless, got back the districts of Rajputana which he had given to the British under the Treaty of Rajpurghat. The subsidiary treaties with the Nizam and the Peshwa, however, continued unchanged.

The new policy adopted by the British in India clearly betrayed a complete ignorance on the part of the Home authorities with regard to the actual state of affairs in this country. (1) It was unfortunate that the weak Rajput states which sought protection from the British, were once again left an easy prey to the rapacious Marathas. (2) Holkar's power had almost been crushed. His territories in the south, and those in the west of the Chambal including Indore which was his capital, had been captured. His important forts like Chandore had fallen, and his appeals to Ranjit Singh in the Punjab for help had failed. If the Home authorities had not interfered for a little while more, the Second Maratha War should have been brought to its logical conclusion.

(3) As a result of the policy of weak conciliation now started, although Maratha territories were returned, the feeling of insult which they harboured, could not be taken away. They were bound to prepare for a revenge, and peace could not be expected to continue for long.

S.M. Edwardes writes ; "The peace concluded with the Marathas in 1805 was unfortunately marked by a spirit of weak conciliation...and (it) ultimately forced the Marquess of Hastings thirteen years later to consummate the task which Wellesley was forbidden by the timidity of the ruling party at the India House to bring to a successful conclusion."¹

1. Roberts, P.E., *op. cit.*, p. 242.
2. *Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 375.

STEPS AGAINST THE FRENCH MENACE

We have already seen how at the time of Wellesley's arrival in India the French generals like Perron and Francois Raymond had secured a formidable position in the courts of the Indian princes like Sindhia and the Nizam. If the contacts of the French with the Indian courts had been allowed to go on unchecked, one could apprehend any trouble from them against the British, particularly in times of active hostilities between the English and the French in Europe. Wellesley who brought the international outlook to bear on the Indian problems, thought it necessary to counteract the growing menace, and he secured a grand success in his designs through the system of Subsidiary Alliances. The existing French troops in the Indian courts were disbanded, and for the future the protected states gave an under-taking not to employ in their service a European without the British permission. This was a master-stroke of Wellesley's policy in India whereby within a short time the French influence was swept away from this country.

Still, there was lurking a French danger to India from outside, however theoretical. There thus were rumours in 1798¹ and again in 1801 that Napoleon was equipping a huge force for an overland march on India with the help of Russia. The march, as it was planned, was to be by way of Uln, to the Danube, the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov, thence via to Tzaritsin, the Volga by boats to Astrakhan, and then Herat, Kandhar to India. The French troops were to be joined by the Russian forces, and they would take as many as four and a half months to reach the Indian borders on the north-west.

It should have been a great feat if Napoleon had succeeded in his venture to march for such a long distance through the lands of the Muslim fanatics and by maintaining such long line of communication to challenge the British in India who had no such problems to face, and on the face of it, it looked more like a dream than reality. But Wellesley was not prepared to leave anything to chance, and he decided to forestall Napoleon's march by developing contacts with the Muslim country's enroute his march.

Thus, in December 1799, Wellesley sent an envoy, John Malcolm, to Tehran, with rich presents to the Shah of Persia. The envoy was accompanied by about five hundred persons, and it cost the British a huge sum of money, a fact which became a subject of criticism at the hands of Wellesley's enemies. The achievements of the envoy, though not of a dubious nature, were never made use of, and the whole expenditure on the mission was a waste. For although two treaties were signed by Malcolm with a minister of the Shah, one a commercial and the other political under which the Shah was not to permit the French a passage through his country nor allow them to

1. See Nisra, G.S., *British Foreign Policy and Indian Affairs 1783-1815*, Bombay, 1963, p. 41.

have a settlement, these treaties were never formally executed. Yet if Wellesley had not sent this mission and Napoleon's march had actually precipitated, he should never have been excused for the lapse by those very persons who now criticised him for his having been too sensitive.

Be that as it may, Wellesley did what appealed to his reason. And besides sending a mission to Persia he also prepared and equipped troops to capture Mauritius. Admiral Rainier, however, did not cooperate with him on the plea that he had no express orders from the Crown for the purpose, and Wellesley could not achieve his purpose. His plan, however, was sound, and it is a pity that the Admiral escaped censure from the higher authorities due perhaps to Wellesley's unpopularity at home, though his refusal to cooperate obviously seemed very unreasonable.

The troops that Wellesley had prepared to occupy Mauritius, were now sent under the command of General Sir David Baird to Egypt to expel the army of Napoleon from that country. Before, however, these troops arrived at their destination, Sir Ralph Abercromby had already forced the French to surrender. The Indian troops finding nothing more to accomplish, had immediately to embark for India, proclaiming to the world, that England could depend on them not only for the defence of their empire in India, but for the defence of its very existence in Europe.

In 1799 in cooperation with the Portuguese, Wellesley made arrangements also for the defence of Goa against the French naval attacks. In 1801 when hostilities broke out between Denmark and Great Britain, Wellesley took an opportunity to march his forces and occupied the Danish settlements of Serampur and Tranquebar in India. As the Peace treaty of Amiens was signed the Home Government ordered the Governor-General to restore Pondicherry and other French possessions in India occupied in the time of Cornwallis to the French. Wellesley knew that the order was wrong, and taking a great risk on himself, he refused to surrender Pondicherry on the plea that he was in correspondence with the authorities at Home to seek clarification on certain points. His position was later on vindicated when the hostilities between England and France broke out once again, and the Home authorities ordered Wellesley to recapture the French possessions, not knowing that they had never been restored to the enemy before.

Among the other measures adopted by Wellesley were his orders to control some newspapers such as the *Asiatic Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, *The Post* which exhibited pro-French attitude in their writing; and the steps to provide protection of the vessels of the English merchants in the Bay of Bengal against French attacks from the Isle of France. Forces were kept ready at Tricomali to march the Red Sea or to meet any troubles within India.

RETIREMENT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Wellesley, as we have seen, was recalled from India in 1805 in the midst of his active hostilities against the Marathas. When he reached home, the Directors did not have a single word of appreciation for him. More than a decade was to elapse before they realised the worth of what he had done and what more he should have done if he had been permitted to continue in India for a short while more. In the meanwhile, however, he was condemned as having brought about a calamity in India for England. James Paull who had personal grievances against Wellesley charged him in the Parliament of certain lapses, though the House of Commons approved generally of what he had accomplished in this country.

Wellesley had yet many fruitful years of life before he died. In 1809 he was sent away to Spain as ambassador to organise resistance to Napoleon. Later on he became Foreign Secretary and in 1812 he was also commissioned to form government, though due to the lack of solid support he failed. Having lost his first wife in 1816 ; he married in 1825 a wealthy American Roman Catholic, Mrs Marianne Patterson, a sister of the Duchess of Leeds with whom he lived a happy life till he died without leaving a legitimate issue, at Kingston House, Brompton, on 26 September 1842.

Wellesley's services to the British in India were great.¹ When he arrived in this country, the conditions for the British were disquieting, as we have already seen. The way he humbled Mysore, attached Hyderabad and Oudh for good to the destinies of the British in India and gave a new shape to the condition that existed in Carnatic, Tanjore and Surat, proved in him a man of destiny, a far-sighted statesman and a genius who could plan and act. It was unfortunate that the Directors did not repose their confidence in him, and could not see things as he saw them. He gave a final blow to the French influence in India and through his subsidiary alliances created conditions in which it would never come back again. It was he who fully demonstrated that the Indian resources and Indian soldiers could be used not only for the expansion of the British dominions on the Indian subcontinent, but also for the protection of the British interest abroad. Had he stayed on in India even for a year more, Lord Hastings, the Earl of Moira, should not have had to fight the Third Maratha War and take up arms to destroy the lawless bands of the Pindaris and the Pathans in 1818. What he saw and understood in India, the Directors of the Company needed another thirteen years in England to comprehend.

1. Though immediately, his relentless wars only increased the company's debt which stood in 1805-06 at £ 28, 523, 804, two-thirds of which had been added during his time, as Charles Grant, chairman of the court of Directors pointed out. Embree, Ainslie, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* London, 1962, p. 227.

Wellesley, however, had certain defects which often overshadowed his qualities that brought about so many gains to the Company. And in the presence of those defects it is not surprising to find the Directors too anxious to avail themselves of the first opportunity to get rid of him. He suffered from too much of conceit, and "never caught even the most fleeting glimpse of any point of view but his own, which was always pikestaff plain and crystal-clear to him."¹ His estimate of Sir John Shore, his predecessor, whom he called a man of "low birth, vulgar manners, and eastern habits", was not only common place and vulgar itself, but showed that his vanity stretched to jarring absurdity. He rarely consulted his own Council which he called a colossal superfluity. The people of India, to him, were "so vulgar, ignorant, rude, and stupid, as to be disgusting and intolerable; especially the ladies, not one of whom by the by is even decently good-looking." His subordinates lacked manners and, we may quote him again, "compel me to entrench myself within forms and ceremonies, to introduce much state into the whole appearance of my establishments and household, and to expel all approaches to familiarity, and to exercise my authority with a degree of vigour and strictness nearly amounting to severity."² And so far as his superiors, the Court of Directors were concerned, they were nothing but "that most loathsome den of the India House."

So long as he stayed in India, he kept busy in his imperial pursuits of conquests and expansion of the British territories hold. He rarely stumbled upon the common man and his problems of an utter harassment, exploitation and oppression. "He must be judged," as V.A. Smith writes, "in terms of power rather than of rights or public morality."³ He was a man from Olympian heights, as Hickey said of him. He jumped from peak to peak, scarcely looking downward at the base.

1. Thompson, Edward, *op. cit.*

2. *Historical Mss. Commission, op. cit.*, quoted by Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

3. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 557.

Earl of Minto, 1807-1813

Born on 23 April 1751 Gilbert Elliot who later on became 1st Earl of Minto, was the son of Sir Gilbert Elliot. His mother was Agnes, daughter of Hugh Dalrymple-Marry-Kynymound. After his education, Elliot was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1774, and in 1776 he was elected to the British Parliament as a Whig. He married Anna Maria daughter of Sir George Amyand in 1777, and when Warren Hastings and Sir Elijah Impey were impeached in the Parliament, he was one of the members who delighted in their condemnation and won some reputation. Twice he was proposed as Speaker, but failed. He occupied several offices of importance, till in 1798 he was made a peer as Lord Minto. In 1799 he was sent as an envoy to Vienna, became President of the Board of Control for India in 1806 and the next year he was appointed Governor-General of India. He took charge of the Government of Calcutta from Sir George Barlow on 3 July 1807.

The Directors had not liked the incessant warfare into which Lord Wellesley had indulged in India. They recalled him and sent Cornwallis once again to bring about peace. The latter, however, died shortly after his arrival in this country, with the result that another man of peace, Lord Minto, was elected for the post. Lord Minto devoted himself to twofold task in India, i.e. to carry on the process of weak reconciliation with the Indian princes that had already been started before him by Barlow, and to prepare against the danger of the French on India which still lurked.

The settlement with the Maratha chiefs had been made, but while some Bundelkhand chiefs had been subdued by Wellesley, others like those of Ajaygarh and Kalinjar still remained to raise their heads during Minto's time. They were made to acknowledge the British supremacy. Gopal Singh of Kota who had resisted the British arms for four years, accepted a small estate for his maintenance and retired.

There was a trouble in Travancore where the subsidiary troops fell into arrears of pay, and the Resident insisted on the native army being reduced. The Dewan of the state resisted and is also said to have conspired to murder the Resident. The British forces were called in, a clash took place in which the Dewan was defeated and the chief agreed to replace him by another person and also to reduce his army.

The Christian missionaries had been rendering a great service to India by spreading education and other such activities. But of late they had started openly criticising the Indian faiths with the result that some people got a provocation and there was a danger of law and order problem developing. Minto warned the missionaries against their provocative activities. They complained against him to the Home authorities. But Minto explained the situation and was able to win appreciation of his views in England. The missionaries had to correct their behaviour.

MISSIONS ABROAD

Relations with Persia

In the meanwhile, to cope with the French menace, Lord Minto had to take steps to re-establish the British influence in the Persian court which had been weakened by this time after the unsuccessful attempt of Wellesley to bring Persia closer to the British, the importance of which had not then been realised in Great Britain. When Minto arrived in India, the British relations with Persia were almost ruptured. Persia had suffered heavily in her war with Russia during 1804-5. She was in need of a dependable ally, for which she preferred the British, but the latter were in no mood to alienate Russia. On the other hand, after formation of the Third Coalition, Napoleon began to realise the importance of Persia in the fulfilment of his designs against England. A French agent named Romieu appeared in Persia in 1805, another French mission visited that country in 1806, and by 1807 Persia was mature for an alliance with France. Before, however, a regular treaty was signed between France and Persia, a Persian ambassador had arrived in India requesting help against Russia; the British having turned a deaf ear, the Franco-Persian treaty materialised on 5 May 1807, under which (1) Persia agreed completely to break with the British, and (2) to help Napoleon in his march on India; while Napoleon (1) undertook to supply Persia, small arms and field guns, and (2) guaranteed the integrity of that country. This is known as the treaty of Finkenstein.

Napoleon defeated Russia on 8 February 1807 at Eylau, inflicted yet another defeat on her at Friedland in July 1807, and in the same year signed the Treaty of Tilsit with Tsar Alexander I under which Russia was converted into a French ally. Now a joint march

of France and Russia, through Turkey and Persia, to invade India, began more seriously to be contemplated.

When Minto took over in India, a French and a Turkish ambassador were in the Persian court. Persia had ceded the port of Gombroon in the Persian Gulf to France. It was soon learnt that 300 French troops had arrived on the Caspian Sea, and another 1,200 were expected to arrive there soon. The French invasion of India could take place only with the help of Turkey and Persia, and the Directors advised immediately to adopt certain defensive measures in India and abroad, and to try to wean away Persia and Turkey from France as soon as possible.

Minto had to act promptly. He picked up Malcolm, once again and besides authorising him to act as an agent of the Government of India in the Gulf of Arabia and in Turkish Arabia and at Baghdad, he was appointed envoy also to the court of Persia. Minto also resolved to send an expedition to prevent the French from occupying any maritime station on the Persian coast, and another one to meet the French army in the field. These expeditions were to march under the directions of Malcolm, who reached Muscat on 30 April, confirmed the British friendship with the Imam there, and arrived at Tehran in June 1808.

Malcolm discovered that early in 1808 General Gardane had appeared at Tehran and another treaty was about to be signed between the French and Persia under which Napoleon agreed to force Russia to vacate Georgia and restore other occupied territories to Persia, in return for which the French army was to be permitted to march through that country. Malcolm had to work cautiously to wean away Persia from France he could not act in a way as to jeopardise any future changes of a rapprochement with Russia. He therefore quietly registered his dissatisfaction at the behaviour of the Persian court, and at the same time let it be known directly or indirectly that the British were determined not to let their interests suffer at the hands of that country.

Luckily, however, towards the close of 1808, the situation took yet another turn in Europe. The Spanish uprising against Napoleon took place, the friendship established at Tilsit began to weaken and Persia, suddenly realised that Napoleon was not in a position to fulfil his promises against Russia. Ground was therefore prepared, and even against the protests of Gardane, a mission from England under Sir Harford Jones was received, and Persia signed a preliminary treaty on 12 March 1809 under which (1) she agreed not to permit any European forces to march through her territories to India, (2) and all the agreements signed earlier with the European powers were declared null and void. The French mission in Persia was dismissed. On 14 March 1812 a definitive treaty to the effect

followed, which was finally confirmed on 25 November 1814 after certain amendments by the Home authorities.

Turkey

Simultaneously with the appointment of Malcolm, it was decided also to appoint a confidential agent in Turkey to study and counteract the moves of France in that country. One Peter Paul Joseph Zohrab, a native of that country itself, was picked up and appointed to the post.

Afghanistan

Napoleon had been sending his emissaries to all parts of Asia to prepare a situation for his march to India. In order to counteract it, Lord Minto adopted similar measures in India, and sent a mission under Elphinstone, also to Kabul. The mission was authorised to offer a subsidy, maximum of three lakh rupees, to Shah Shuja the ruler of that state, for a defensive alliance against Persia and France. When Elphinstone arrived in Afghanistan, Shah Shuja was busy fighting against his internal enemies, and he had to wait for a couple of months till the ruler of Kabul gave him an interview at Peshawar and after lengthy negotiation, finally signed a treaty in 1809. Under the treaty the Afghan ruler was to check the French from marching through his territories to India, and the British in return were to supply him military stores and arms. Soon after the treaty, however, Shah Shuja himself was overthrown and sent away as an exile to Kashmir, and then to India. Elphinstone tried to conclude a similar treaty with his successor Mahmud Shah but the latter demanded a heavy subsidy as its price, to which the former could not agree and returned to India without achieving his object.

Sind

A similar mission under Captain David Seton was sent to Sind. Seton, however, went beyond his powers and concluded a defensive alliance with the Amirs of that country, which was repudiated by Lord Minto, because Sind, nominally, was under the paramountcy of Afghanistan, and was likely to use this alliance against the latter country. Friendly relations with that state were, however, established by an agreement signed in 1809, which was renewed in 1820.

Ava

Early in 1810 it was learnt that a French agent had appeared in the Court of Ava as well, to subvert the British rule in India with the help of Burma. Lord Minto despatched Lieut. Canning to counteract the French designs in that country, and the latter succeeded in his mission.

RELATIONS WITH PUNJAB

Nearer home, Minto's relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, may be examined in somewhat greater details. Till as late as the fifties of the 18th century we learn that the English had an inadequate knowledge of the Sikhs. Franklin wrote then that the "Sikhs are in their person tall...their aspect is ferocious, and their eyes piercing...they speak the language of Afghans, their collected army amounts to 250,000 men, a terrific force, yet from want of union not much to be dreaded."¹ This was an estimate of the Sikhs drawn when Ranjit Singh had not yet been born.

A more judicious observance of the Sikhs was, however, made only by Forster in 1783 when he estimated more surely the real character of them and prophesied that an able chief would one day probably attain to absolute power on the ruins of the rude commonwealth. Warren Hastings one of the founders of the British Empire in India knew the Sikhs yet better in 1784 when although far off from the regions of Punjab as yet, he advised his government to take "reasonable means of opposition...not to permit the Sikh people to grow into maturity without interruption."² It was a clear writing on the wall, therefore, that Ranjit Singh was not going to have very good circumstances on the East.

The first direct contact between the English and the Sikhs was made in 1800. The principle of the British policy towards the Sikhs at this time seems to have been one of making the growing Sikh power of Ranjit Singh a buffer state between the English and Russia which was developing her ambitions in the Middle East. Russia could contact Persia and Afghanistan and attack India, and in 1771 General Barker had already written to Jhanda Singh Bhangal who was the chief of one of the twelve Sikh principalities in the Punjab: "It is clear that as the Khalsa army is on the watch, no one can march on Hindustan unopposed." Moreover, the British were desirous that if at all a war had to be fought with Russia, that should be fought only in the Punjab or beyond if possible. The British were harbouring yet another apprehension. They had not yet consolidated their power in India where the people, more specially the Muslims, being anxious to throw off their yoke could easily be exploited by the Russians or the Afghans if either of them occupied the Punjab.

After capturing a greater part of northern and southern India, more particularly after the Anglo-Oudh Treaty of friendship, the English had naturally to turn their attention towards the North-West frontiers under Lord Wellesley in 1800 a definite opportunity had offered itself when India was threatened by an invasion of Zaman Shah the

1. Franklin, *Shah Alam*, pp. 175-178.

2. See Durand, Sir H. Marion, *The First Afghan War and Its Causes* (2 vols), I, p. 121.

Afghan ruler who had been invited by Sultan Tipu, a bitter enemy of the British. As a precautionary measure the British sent Munshi Yusof Ali with rich presents to the court of Ranjit Singh who after his occupation of Lahore in 1799, had already entered into a career of establishing supremacy all over the Punjab to request him not to help Zaman Shah in case of his invasion. Soon, however, we learn the danger of Zaman Shah's invasion receded and Yusof Ali was called back by the British.

This was the first regular British acquaintance with Ranjit Singh, of which the historians do not seem to have taken much note.

The second contact between the British and Ranjit Singh was made in 1805. Towards the beginning of the 9th century the conflict between the two giants, the English and the Marathas for supremacy in India had sharpened, as we have already examined. The two Maratha chiefs Mahadji Sindhia and Jaswant Rao Holkar had developed their influence far and wide, but none of them was a match to the seasoned British diplomacy. When the contest between the two powers developed, both the Maratha chiefs requested Ranjit Singh's help against the English. At first it was Sindhia who after extending his sway over the regions north of Delhi contacted the Sikhs through his French generals Perron and Bourquin. But Ranjit Singh was too shrewd to do more than what his resources permitted. Soon after Sindhia was defeated by the English and his power was crushed.

With Jaswant Rao Holkar, however, the story was different. Although this Maratha chief was defeated at Dig and Farrukhabad by the English under General Lake, yet real complications arose only when Holkar fled to Punjab requested Ranjit Singh for help. This happened in 1805 and General Lake wrote to Ranjit Singh that if he did so he would be responsible for the consequences. For a time Ranjit Singh was indecisive and to consult some other important Sikh chiefs he called a meeting of the Gurmata at Amritsar.¹ Majority of those who were present in the meeting and particularly the chiefs such as Fateh Singh Ahluwalia advised Ranjit Singh not to spoil his relations with the English, and to this he agreed.

Although some sort of understanding between the English and Holkar had also been reached on 24 December 1805, yet on 1 January 1806 General Lake signed an agreement with Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh jointly which provided that Ranjit Singh would compel Holkar to retire from Amritsar and would not give him any help. The soldiers of the Maratha chief who had been defeated by the English at Farrukhabad and Dig were, it was learnt, discouraged and wanted to go back to their country. Ranjit Singh was not only to permit them to go but also would give them facilities and encouragement towards that direction.

1. This is said to have been the last meeting of this Central Assembly of the Sikhs which after this was dissolved by Ranjit Singh himself.

On the other hand, it was laid down that the British would withdraw their forces from Punjab and also that they would not permit the Maratha chief to molest those regions. The British would never attack any territory of Ranjit Singh if he remained friendly towards them. According to Latif, Ranjit Singh himself proposed besides this that the British could have their control over the cis-Sutlej regions, i.e. regions on the left side of the river Sutlej if they liked, Ranjit Singh would not intervene.¹

Chief importance of this treaty was that it brought the English in a regular contact with Ranjit Singh. Now the ground was cleared for the further development of the Anglo-Sikh relations.

Cis-Sutlej Relations

Now turning to the cis-Sutlej affairs, major portion of the cis-Sutlej area as we learn was under the Phulkian family which was one of the most powerful of the original twelve Sikh confederacies and comprised the states of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. Its founder was one Phul Singh a *jat* of ancient "lineage connected with Jesul-meer in the Rajputana desert," writes J.H. Gorden. Phul built a village in 1640 calling it after his name. He was patronised by the emperor of Delhi. He embraced the Sikh religion and his seven sons became the ancestors of the reigning families of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. "Other minor families sprang from them, all attaining to wealth and power."² Of all these states that of Patiala was the largest and the strongest. It had seen its palmy days under Baba Ala Singh the grandson of Chaudhri Phul Singh. After the death of Ala Singh his grandson Amar Singh came to power in 1765, and it was under him that this state became the strongest one in the cis-Sutlej areas. He was given the title of *Raja-i-Rajgan Bahadur* by Ahmad Shah Abdali. But the present ruler Sahib Singh who succeeded his father Amar Singh at the age of seven, was weak, and the state under him fell to its wretched days. Shahib Singh was always in conflict with his own wife Aus Kaur of which the other state of Nabha and Jind wanted to take an advantage. Nor was the condition of the peasantry of these regions less pitiable. Sunk in their political intrigues and voluptuousness the rulers seemed to have little time to think of agricultural development of this country. There was no trade or industry which could enrich the resources of these states. All around there was a confusion and dissatisfaction of which the English, the Marathas and Ranjit Singh were out to take advantage.

In 1806 there seemed to have been an understanding reached between the English and the Sikhs that the cis-Sutlej states could go under the protection of the former. On his way to Lahore while

1. Latif. *op. cit.*, p. 367.

2. Gorden, *The Sikhs* p. 94.

pursuing Holkar, General Lake had been well received by the cis-Sutlej chiefs, in return for which after the Anglo-Sikh agreement, he gave them many territorial rewards. And now after this began to develop intimate relations with them. But this policy of intervention beyond the Jumna was not liked by the Directors of the Company at home and it had to be abandoned before the English relations with these states could be regularised. The British policy of non-intervention continued for some time, which gave an encouragement to Ranjit Singh to proceed to these regions on his own mission.

In 1806 there was a quarrel between Patiala and Nabha on a small town of Doladhi. When they could not decide the dispute between them the Raja of Nabha along with the Raja of Jind appealed to Ranjit Singh to decide the dispute. Ranjit Singh was already in search of such an opportunity and marched towards the cis-Sutlej areas immediately along with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and others like Gurdit Singh Ladwe. He brought with him a force of 20,000 soldiers, too big of course for the problem he was invited to solve, and instead of deciding the dispute between the states he invaded and occupied the town of Doladhi himself. He also realised a heavy *nazrana* from Patiala.

On his return Ranjit Singh conquered Ludhiana, Dakha, Raikot, Jagraon and Ghungrana; but distributed these territories among the friends who accompanied him.

In 1807 Ranjit Singh found yet another opportunity to march into the cis-Sutlej regions. This time there was a quarrel between Aus Kaur the queen of Patiala and her husband. She wanted to secure a good jagir for her minor son Karam Singh, which her husband would not permit. She invited Ranjit Singh to intercede on her behalf with a promise that if the dispute was decided in her favour she would give him a valuable necklace and the famous brass-gun called *Khuri Khan*. Ranjit Singh accepted the invitation. But before he crossed the Sutlej the husband and wife, according to some accounts, had already made up between them. Despite this Ranjit Singh forced his reward on the queen.¹

From Patiala this time Ranjit Singh proceeded towards Ambala from whose chief Rani Daya Kaur he realised a tribute. He occupied Naraingarh which was handed over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.

1. Different versions, however, are given of this expedition of Ranjit Singh. According to one it was Rani who invited Ranjit Singh as explained above. According to the second it was Raja Bhag Singh who being threatened by the chiefs of Thanesar, Kaithal and Rani Aus Kaur, invited Ranjit. According to the third Sahib Singh invited Ranjit for help against his queen and his son Karam Singh. The view expressed above, however, seems correct.

He also realised a tribute from Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, from Jodh Singh of Kalsia and many other Sardars and zamindars a long list of whom is given by Dewan Amar Nath.¹ Among these chiefs those of Mani Majra and Ropar were important. Ranjit Singh also occupied Wadni, Zira and Kot Kapura. Zira was given over to Mohkam Chand and Wadni in Ferozepur to Sada Kaur, the Maharaja's mother-in-law.

This naturally produced dismay among the chiefs of the cis-Sutlej state. They held a conference among themselves and went to Mr Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, appealing him for British protection against Ranjit Singh. Their argument was that the cis-Sutlej region had always been protected by Delhi government, and now since Delhi was under the English occupation, the English should extend their protecting hand on their states. But this was the time when Seton could give them no definite assurance for British help, however willing he might have been to extend the British influence towards that side.

In fact by this time a definite change had taken place in the British policy towards the cis-Sutlej states, as in March 1808 the Governor-General Lord Minto himself wrote; "Although as a principle we cordially recognise the wisdom and the justice of abstaining from all interferences in the contests, disputes, and concerns of states with which we are unconnected by the obligations of alliance, and are fully convinced of the embarrassments and inconvenience of extending our protection to petty chieftains, who are unable to protect their territories from the aggressions of more powerful neighbours, yet we are disposed to think that cases may occur in which temporary deviation from those general principles may be a measure of defensive policy, the neglect of which might be productive of much more danger and embarrassment than persecution of it, and that the certain resolution of the Raja of Lahore to subjugate the states situated between the Sutlej and the frontier of our dominion would, under other circumstances than the present, constitute a case on which, on grounds of self-defence, the interposition of the British power for the purpose of preventing the execution of such a project, would be equally just and prudent."² And therefore, as Latif writes, the English did wish "to limit the ambition of the Maharaja to the north of the Sutlej. But at the same time...they were afraid of thwarting him so abruptly as to cause rupture of friendly relations and throw him into the arms of France."³ Napoleon had an ambition to conquer the British island and also wanted to occupy their eastern empire. The British could ill afford to push Ranjit Singh into his camp. Thus according to Murray,

1. *Zafar Nama-i-Ranjit Singh*, 1908 (Persian)

2. Count of Minto, *Lord Minto in India*, pp. 81.

4. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

although giving no assurance. Seton gave them a hint that in emergency they would not be deserted.¹ His reply was cautious which as in the words of Payne signified that "we can promise nothing definite but you have our sympathy, and we will do what we can."²

But this could not satisfy the cis-Sutlej chiefs. In the meanwhile, however, Ranjit Singh sent his messengers to calm their apprehensions and they also seemed to have decided that instead of seeking protection from the British, if they could have the protection from Ranjit Singh himself, that would be better. Ranjit Singh and Sahib Singh of Patiala met forthwith and exchanged their turbans as a mark of perpetual friendship.

Treaty of Tilsit

Just at this time there occurred an incident in Europe which changed the course of History in the Punjab. This incident was Napoleon's signing of the Treaty of Tilsit with Tzar Alexander of Russia, as already referred to. After this Napoleon decided to march towards the east with the purpose of occupying the British Empire in India. The English thus being threatened, Lord Minto sent Metcalfe to Lahore with a twofold purpose, firstly to counteract the French designs in the Punjab and secondly to check Ranjit Singh's aggressive policy in the cis-Sutlej states. The purpose in the words of Lady Minto was "to woo the great Rajah to an alliance, while refusing him the increase of territory on which he had set his heart."³

Metcalfe met Ranjit Singh at Kasur on 11 September 1807 and discussed the affairs. Ranjit Singh asked him to submit a written draft of the treaty that he wanted him to sign. The terms of the treaty according to the draft that Metcalfe submitted were :

1. Both Ranjit and the English would join their defences against France, and Ranjit Singh would check Napoleon from passing through the Punjab in case he wanted to invade the British India.
2. The English would have a free passage through the Punjab in case of a war with the French.
3. Ranjit Singh would extend his protection on the British messengers passing through his territories.

Terms of the treaty obviously paid no heed to Ranjit Singh's personal ambitions and it is said Ranjit Singh smiled and told Fakir Aziz-ud-din, his foreign minister as to how selfish the British were.

1. Murray *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 64. 65.

2. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

3. Count of Minto, *op. cit.*, 81.

Ranjit Singh, however, expressed his readiness to sign a defensive alliance with the English but forwarded his own three conditions for doing so : (1) the English would not interfere in his quarrels with the Amirs of Kabul, (2) the English would not establish a friendly relation with that chief and (3) Ranjit Singh would be recognised the King of all the Sikhs, including the cis-Sutlej chiefs, and Metcalfe was also asked to accompany him in his cis-Sutlej conquests. Metcalfe refused to sign such an agreement without the permission of the Governor-General, and according to Moorcroft Ranjit Singh was so furious over the English interference in his cis-Sutlej affairs that only Faqir Aziz-ud-din "dissuaded him from war."¹

Any way, asking Metcalfe to deliberate over the matter and in the meanwhile to accompany him so as to be available for discussions, Ranjit Singh marched south of the Sutlej. First he conquered Faridkot and Malerkotla, then Ambala and Shahabad, and also realised a tribute from the Thanesar chief. "There was practically an earthquake in the cis-Sutlej country," wrote Sohan Lal.²

Metcalfe was accompanying Ranjit Singh in his exploits in Faridkot and Malerkotla, and this indirectly served a purpose of Ranjit Singh which Metcalfe did not know. Ranjit Singh, writes Griffin, "clearly kept the envoy in his camp to weaken the resistance of the chiefs and to obtain some sort of official sanction for his enterprise."³ Again writes Latif, the "object of the Lahore ruler was to gain time and trick the envoy."⁴ The Malerkotla ruler, we learn, actually protested to the British resident at Delhi that they were helping Ranjit Singh against him. This seems to have astonished the British, and orders were issued to Metcalfe immediately to dissociate himself from Ranjit Singh. Accordingly when Ranjit Singh entered Ambala, a state seeking British protection, Metcalfe withdrew to Fatehbad and *remonstrated* to Ranjit Singh for the political trick that had been played on him. Yet, however, the circumstances being precarious the British did not want to break with the Maharaja, as Lord Minto wrote : "I do not think that we should be justified, in point of policy, in breaking at present with Ranjit Singh. The point to aim at in our present transactions with the Raja of Lahore appears to be, that we should keep ourselves as free as can be done without a rupture. I should on this principle rather wish to protract than accelerate the treaty."⁵

1. Moorcraft, *Travels*, I, p. 94.

2. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh*.

3. Griffin, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

4. Latif, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

5. See Kaye, *Life of Lord Metcalfe*, I, p. 273.

French Danger Receded

Just this time there was a Spanish uprising against France and the relations between the English and Turkey also improved with the result that now there was no more the danger of France invading India. Emboldened by the circumstances Metcalfe asked Ranjit to accept the alliance on British terms under which henceforward he would not interfere in the cis-Sutlej areas. Ranjit Singh was not prepared to withdraw from the cis-Sutlej states so abruptly and leave them in the hands of the British. And according to Griffin he immediately called his General Mohkam Chand from Kangra, collected his ammunition and prepared for war. But he was too wise to take such a drastic step in practice. Metcalfe himself believed that this action of his was meant only to browbeat the British. He wrote back to the Governor-General accordingly and the latter sent an ultimatum to the Lahore ruler saying :

“His Lordship has learnt with great surprise and concern, that the Maharaja aims at the subjection of chiefs who have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling in the North of Hindustan and is more especially astonished to find that the Maharaja requires the assent of the British Government to the execution of the design. By the issue of war with the Marathas the British Government became possessed of the power and right formerly exercised by that nation in the North of Hindustan.”

Ranjit Singh did not reply to this ultimatum immediately and in the meanwhile began to contact the Raja of Patiala for a common cause against the British. But the Raja of Patiala had already been wooed by the British and promised all protection against Ranjit Singh. The delay in reply infuriated the British and David Ochterlony was asked to march his forces and display his power at Ludhiana. Ochterlony reached the place in February 1809 and sent a message to Ranjit Singh asking him to withdraw his troops from the cis-Sutlej areas and that on the failure to do so it would be assumed that Ranjit Singh did not care for the English friendship.

Treaty of Amritsar

Ranjit Singh hesitated for a time, but finally on the advice of Faqir Aziz-ud-din agreed to the English proposals. Thus on 2 April, 1809 Ranjit Singh recalled his forces from Faridkot and on 25 April he signed with the British what is known as the Amritsar Treaty of 1809. Important terms of the treaty were :

1. The two governments would maintain friendly relations with each other.

2. British would have no concern on the north-west of the river Sutlej, nor would they intervene in Ranjit Singh's relations with the chiefs in those regions. Likewise, Ranjit Singh would now never think of the capture of the cis-Sutlej states which were declared under the protection of the British.

3. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was recognised as an independent ruler and was to be in the list of active friends of the British.

4. Neither side would keep a large army on its respective bank of the river Sutlej.

5. Ranjit Singh would not maintain in the 45 *parganas* in the cis-Sutlej regions which were yet to remain under his control, an army more than what was required for the internal peace.

6. Violation of any of the terms of the treaty by any of the contracting parties would make the treaty null and void.

AN APPRAISAL

Different opinions have been expressed on Ranjit Singh's signing this treaty with the British. Thus says Dr Sinha, "Ranjit Singh suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to put his pride in his pocket and eat the humble pie." Metcalfe also wrote that Ranjit Singh "is not famous for desperate enterprises."¹ This latter estimate of Ranjit Singh by a man who was directly dealing with him and with whom Ranjit Singh professed to have established friendly relations by signing this treaty cannot but make us conclude that this action of Ranjit Singh was the clear acceptance of a diplomatic defeat. One of the cherished goals of Ranjit was to unite all the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh both in the cis and the trans-Sutlej areas under his own banners, but in this the Maharaja bitterly failed. Moreover the British came nearer Lahore, and at a place from where they could easily study the movements of Ranjit Singh and intrigue against the Lahore *Raj*. Their proximity to Ranjit Singh's borders gave them a certain degree of control over the Maharaja's relations with Bhawalpur, Sind and Afghanistan, and in all these cases Ranjit Singh suffered at the hands of the British. Ranjit Singh's acceptance that he would not keep in his cis-Sutlej regions forces in more than the number required to maintain internal peace, was according to some writers, a blow to his prestige as well as authority.

The claim of the British on the cis-Sutlej states too, were based only on fictitious grounds, and betrayed only a policy of 'might is right.' Just four years before the signing of this treaty, on the intervention of the Home government the British government in India had decided not to intervene in the affairs of the cis-Sutlej

1. Sinha N K., *Ranjit Singh*, p. 154.

states, and we fail to understand on what moral grounds could the British declare now that by "the issue of war with the Marathas the British government became possessed of the power and right formerly exercised by that nation in the North of Hindustan." The war against the Marathas had already been fought and won by the British when they occupied Delhi in 1803 and when they signed an agreement with Holkar on 24 December 1805. If this victory of the English on the Marathas did not justify their interference in the affairs on the cis-Sutlej states in 1805, how could it justify such an interference in 1809 ?

And again, the argument that since the cis-Sutlej states were under the Marathas, after their removal from the scene by the British these states should automatically fall into their hands too, cannot go too far. All these states had been a part of the Mughal Empire before Abdali occupied the territory from the Indus to the Jumna. After the decline of the Mughal power it was Abdali who appointed governors for these regions and administered them, and it was later on from Abdali that the Sikh chiefs wrested their territories and not from the Marathas.

The Marathas were only imposters and not rulers of these states, nor could it be said that the cis-Sutlej had ever fallen under their protection.

Moreover from geographical point of view, from cultural point of view or from religious point of view, these states were akin more to the territories in the trans-Sutlej areas than to those anywhere else. That this point was accepted by the British themselves was proved when after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the entire cis-Sutlej area upto Delhi, even including Delhi itself, was put with the trans-Sutlej territories and the whole area was declared as one province.

Yet more, writes S.R. Kohli, Ranjit Singh's intentions over the cis-Sutlej states were not selfish.¹ He was a man who during his life time, never used his crown, nor sat on his throne or strike coins in his own name. The coins were rather struck after the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. If such a man wanted to unite all the Khalsa, including the cis-Sutlej states, under his banner, he was fighting for a national cause, and the opposition of the cis-Sutlej states was *anti-national*, yet more so when they sought the British protection.

If with such reasonable claims as above he could not succeed in occupying the cis-Sutlej states, it was clearly a diplomatic defeat of the Maharaja.

But, on the other hand, some assert that this treaty was not a

1. Kohli, S.R., *Ranjit Singh* (Punjabi), p. 136.

diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh, it was rather by a master stroke of his policy that he saved the Punjab from the British hands at least till a few years after his death. Moreover, writes Cunningham, he got a *Carte Blanche* for realising his ambition in the north and north-western parts of the Punjab.¹ His southern borders having been secure, he had no more to keep a huge army for protection against the British and waste his money and energy on that side. These he could now use elsewhere.

And yet more, with enemies all around and with his power in the Punjab itself unconsolidated, it added greatly to his prestige by having established friendly relations with a power so big as the English.

Be that as it may, whether it was a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh that he signed the treaty under duress² or it was a master stroke of his policy, we can only say that Ranjit Singh had no alternative to what he did. Ranjit Singh's was yet an infant State and to have challenged the English who had come all the way from Calcutta to Delhi, could not but prove suicidal. The "downfall of every Indian power, which has measured arms with us is a constant reflection with him" wrote Governor-General Auckland in 1838³, and this was applicable no better to the conditions in 1838 than to those in 1809.

Moreover, Ranjit Singh's soldiers were no equal to the British in training and discipline, and this he realised himself. An interesting story is told by some writers like Latif and Gordon. It is said that Metcalfe had brought with him some Muslim soldiers, and during the time his negotiations with the Maharaja were going on the *Muharram* festival of the Muslims fell. To celebrate this the Muslim soldiers of the British decided to take out a procession. When this procession passed before some *Gurdwaras* in Lahore, moved by indignation some *Akalis* fell on them. But the latter gave them a square battle with the result that a few soldiers as they were, they routed more than a thousand of the *Akalis* who fled before them. This incident is said to have opened the eyes of Ranjit Singh. While on the one hand he praised the bravery of these soldiers before Metcalfe, on the other hand, he was convinced that he had to proceed against the British only with caution. The instances as to how the large armies of Holkar and the other Marathas had been destroyed by the English,

1. Cunningham, *op cit.*, p. 146.
2. As it is clear from the writings of Osborne, who visited Ranjit in 1838. Osborne writes: "The conduct of Ranjit Singh was so unsatisfactory... that it was deemed expedient to advance a body of troops under Colonel Ochterlony, to enforce the demands, and to support the negotiations of our agent." *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, p. 18.
3. See Trotter, Cap. L. J., *The Earl of Auckland* (1905).

too were before him. His maternal uncle Bhag Singh of Jind who being nearer Delhi had studied the British strength more closely, also advised him against challenging this power. And besides, Ranjit Singh knew that the British were determined and had evolved a definite policy of bringing the cis-Sutlej states under their protection.

In case of a war with the English it was feared that all the cis-Sutlej chiefs would side with them, and within his own territories in the trans-Sutlej areas too "it was feared that taking advantage of his difficulties the half-conquered chieftains and tribes would break out into a rebellion against him." And yet more, "finding Maharaja obdurate, the British government was likely to extend its protection to the rulers of Kasur, Multan and Jhang as well,"¹ the rulers, indeed, who were already anxious to secure that help against Ranjit. Now were Ranjit Singh's financial resources and his arms supply anything comparable to those of the English.

"He never exhausted his strength in wild and hazardous enterprises, but restraining his ambition within the limits of a reasonable probability, they were not only so well timed and skilfully arranged as generally to ensure success," wrote Osborne in 1838, "but failure, (in the rare instance when he did fail), never seriously shook his stability or impaired his resources."² And the greatest service that he rendered to his nation by not entering into this hazardous enterprise, as according to Abdul Qadir, was that by getting a free hand for national development he "was able to lift his people from the position of political adventurers and free lances and give them the status of imperial race."³ While on the other hand, the cis-Sutlej states which fell under the British protection, remained, most of them, semi-independent till the end of the British rule, whereas rest of the Punjab which was under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was annexed by the British after his death, and fell directly under their rule; a fate, which should have befallen the cis-Sutlej states as well, if they had gone under Ranjit Singh's suzerainty.

Be that as it may, a great advantage was secured by Lord Minto on this side of the British empire in India. Napoleon's designs to march on India paid him well and he extended the British hold in India upto the river Sutlej, without having fired a single shot of his gun.

THE OTHER CHANGES

Of the other steps taken by Lord Minto to defend the British interests in the east, one was his expedition against the Isle de Buonaparte which surrendered before the British on 8 July 1810. The

1. Qadir Said Abdul, *Centenary Volume of Ranjit Singh*, Khalsa College, Amritsar.
2. Osborne, *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, p. 16.
3. Qadir, Sayed Abdul, *Amritsar Cent. Vol. op. cit.*

Isle de France capitulated on 3 December 1810 and Farquhar was appointed as Governor of these two French islands.

“France had assumed universal dominion over the continent of Europe. To counteract this, England had been compelled, as a measure of self-defence, to acquire control of all the foreign colonies.”¹

Since Holland had fallen under the influence of France, it was thought necessary that the Dutch power should be expelled from Jawa and other such places which could easily be used by the French against India. The Dutch settlement of Amboyna was captured in 1810, and Minto personally led an expedition to take possession of Jawa in September 1811.

As Denmark declared war against England, all her settlements and factories in India were likewise taken possession of. Defensive measures were adopted at Goa in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities. And when, as a result of the anti-French economic measures of England which hampered the free movements of the neutrals on the high seas, the United States of America declared war against the British, Minto adopted measures to detain the US vessels and ships wherever found.

“Thus,” writes G.S. Misra, “it was the French rivalry which accelerated the process of British conquests in the eastern world... The impetus for British expansion in India, therefore, came from the metropolis where the force of national interest drove forward the course of events. It had been the glory of Lord Minto’s administration that, whereas, at its commencement, dread of the French invasion of India haunted the imagination of British statesmen, at its close the enemy had come to lose all its acquisitions east of the cape.”² The territories thus acquired, continued with the British, till in the settlement of 1814-15, most of them were returned to the respective powers.

GENERAL POLICY TOWARDS INDIAN STATES

Lord Minto’s reign represents that period of the Indian history at the end of which over fifty-years old British policy towards the Indian states initiated by Lord Clive and more decisively enforced by Warren Hastings came to an end, and in time of his successor, the Earl of Moira, the British launched a new policy which truly, represented them as a sovereign ruling power concerned not only with the welfare of those within the territories directly held by them but also with that of the people in the Indian states whose destinies were supposed to be held under control by the Indian princes only

1. *ibid.* p. 90.

2. Misra, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

in trust for them. A short account of the old British policy which reached its culmination in the time of Minto will not be a digression from the main topic under study.

"The ruling princes of India," wrote Lieutenant-General Sir George MaMun in 1936, "are one of the most astounding facts of that continent, and of the unparalleled feat in history of the rebuilding in peace and prosperity of the thousand pieces into which the great Turkish Empire of Delhi crashed, close on two hundred years ago."¹ They numbered between 500 and 600, and their territory varied "from that of Nizam, as large as third of France, to others no larger than Battersca Park."² The British policy towards these states from 1757 to 1813 is epitomised by Lee-Warner in his remarkable book *The Native States of India* under the title of the Ring Fence Policy.

The period of the Ring Fence Policy starts with the year 1757. In that year the British won their Battle of Plassey against Siraj-ud-Daula, which had, as Admiral Watson writes, an "extraordinary importance not only to the Company but to the British nation in general." As a result of their victory at Plassey, the British became definitely an Indian power, but they had as yet neither an ambition nor the power to assert their paramountcy over the other states. They were, as Lee-Warner may be quoted, "barely struggling" for their existence, and the East India Company at this time, "recoiled from the expense and the danger of extending its treaties of alliance and self-defence beyond the ring fence of its own territorial acquisitions". Nor were the English as yet fully acquainted with the Indian conditions and life. They were a commercial concern which had tasted political power, but was not anxious to extend it.

The main concern of the company at this time, therefore, was self-defence, for which they entered into friendly alliances with some of these states. The basis of these alliances was equality, which though at times tried to shift towards British superiority, and in the time of Wellesley the superiority was definitely asserted; theoretically at least the basis was kept. With these friendly princes of India the British created a sort of ring fence within which, as Barton writes, "the Company considered its responsibility for maintaining peace to be confined to its own boundaries and those of the allied states."³ This policy continued till 1813, though with a change of emphasis here and there, and during this period, as Lee-Warner writes, "the British endeavoured as far as possible to live within a Ring-Fence and beyond that they avoided intercourse with the chiefs." Security "was the watchword of their policy and they refused to enter into entangling alliances with native powers, and fought, when forced to do so,

1. *The Indian States and Princes*, 1936, p. 15.

2. *ibid*, p. 16.

3. Sir William Barton, *The Princes of India*, p. 248.

to defend their territories or those of their allies who had been guaranteed protection by treaty.”¹

Starting with Clive, when Bengal came in his control, as we have already seen, he clearly wrote to the Directors in one of his letters: “The limits of the Nabob’s dominions are sufficient to answer all your purposes. These we think, ought to constitute the boundaries, not only of all your territorial possessions and influence in these parts, but of your commerce also since by grasping at more, you endanger the safety of those immense revenues, and that well-founded power, which you now enjoy, without the hopes of obtaining an adequate advantage.”²

Hence, though Clive signed alliances with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Oudh, they were meant only for self-defence. His treaty with Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, signed at Allahabad in August 1765, was particularly important, whereby Oudh was made a buffer state, as Ramsay Muir comments: “It was a matter of fixed policy to maintain a close alliance with Oudh which was useful as a bulwark against the threatening power of the Marathas.”³

The Ring Fence Policy was continued by Warren Hastings, and friendship with Oudh was strengthened by treaty of Benaras in 1772 whereby the British sold Kora and Allahabad to the Nawab for 50 lakh rupees. The Nawab was to be protected in case of a war, but there was to be no interference in his internal affairs. Nor did the First Maratha War, 1778-82 and the Second Mysore War, 1780-84 bring about any change in the policy initiated by Clive. Pitt’s India Act of 1784 rather laid down the policy in clear words: “Whereas to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honour and the policy of this nation, the Governor-General and his Council are not without the express authority, of the Court of Directors or of the Select Committee, to declare wars or commence hostilities or enter into any treaty for making war, against any of the country princes or states in India.”

Slowly however, the arguments forwarded by Clive against developing interests outside Bengal were losing force and when Cornwallis came to India in 1786, he had to enter into alliance with the Marathas and Nizam against Sultan Tipu of Mysore. The third Mysore War was fought, after which Cornwallis was able to assert that “we have effectively crippled our enemy without making our friends too formidable.” This war which started as a result of the British troops

1. Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, 1, p. 24.

2. See Chapter on Clive.

3. Ramsay Muir, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

being given to Nizam in fulfilment of an agreement against Tipu to recover certain territories from the latter when his claims upon them had been recognised by the British themselves, is supposed to be a clear departure from the policy of non-aggression and non-interference. Yet it has been justified by some English historians as unavoidable, though the Home did not like it, and it was only in defiance of the Home government that it was done. That is perhaps why Cornwallis only crippled Tipu, and did not depose him and annex the whole Mysore state despite the fact that he could easily do so.

Cornwallis was followed by Sir John Shore, and the latter was followed by Lord Wellesley in 1798 as the Governor-General of Bengal; and the latter on reaching this country found conditions which required a definite change in policy towards the states. Nizam had not been helped by the British against a Maratha attack in the time of Sir John Shore, and therefore he was angry with the Company. The Marathas had been too much elated and puffed up with their recent success against the Nizam, and were getting a source of danger to the British. Nor was Sultan Tipu satisfied with his present position. The humiliations of his defeat under Cornwallis weighed heavily with him and he simmered for revenge. And to add to all this was the danger of Napoleon's attack of India. Already French officers were training the forces of all the three, the Nizam, the Marathas and Sultan Tipu, and through them dangerous situation could be created for the British in this country. Under these circumstances the policy of strict non-interference stood abused, and Wellesley felt it necessary that the princes allied to the British should be reduced to subordination.

By a masterstroke of his policy, therefore, Wellesley started the system of Subsidiary Alliances, under which a state entering it had to be protected by the British with a contingent force to meet the expenses of which the state had to part with some of its own territories or make regular money payments. The foreign relations of the state were to be conducted through the British alone, and in its disputes with others the British arbitration had to be accepted. And in return for all this the state concerned was not only to be protected externally, but against internal troubles as well. Pannikar has nicely commented upon the system as: "The subsidiary alliances developed as a defensive system by which the Company, anxious for its trade, determined on the defence, not of its own boundaries, but of the state next to it in geographical position. This policy was later on described by Lord Salisbury as that of defending the moon in order to ward off an attack on the Earth from Mars."¹

Treaties were concluded under the new system with the Nizam of Hyderabad, Nawab of Oudh, the ruler of Mysore and Peshwa,

1. Pannikar K.M., *Relations of Indian States*, p. 8.

and commenting on this Wellesley himself wrote : "A general bond of connection is now established between the British government and the principal states of India which renders it in the interests of every state to maintain its alliance with British government--and which secure to every state the unmolested exercise of its separate authority within the limits of its established domination under the general protection of the British power."¹

His policy, however, writes Dr M.S. Mehta, "had been condemned by the Court of Directors, and that strict instructions had been laid down for his successor to pursue a more moderate and pacific course towards the Indian States." The successor was strictly told that "no measure was to be undertaken to increase the political responsibility of the company."²

Some writers try to argue that close examination of the new treaties show that there was a spirit of reciprocity running in their terms, and that the sovereignty being vested in the states themselves, there was at least a theoretical equality between the parties that signed a treaty. There may be a substance in these arguments, still it cannot be denied that Wellesley considerably departed from the old policy of non-intervention. And therefore the only justification of his policy being placed in the first category, i.e. the Ring Fence, is that the Directors disliked it, desired to be reversed, and they at least still adhered to the old policy, so much so that Cornwallis was sent to India once again to undo the mischief Wellesley was supposed to have done.

The next eight years, 1805 to 1813, therefore saw efforts to re-establish the policy of non-intervention again, though it could not be adhered to as strictly as the Directors had desired. Cornwallis unfortunately died shortly after he assumed the charge of Governor-Generalship again, and Sir George Barlow who succeeded him in 1805, tried to revert to non-intervention as far as possible. The British protection from the Rajputs was withdrawn, and very advantageous terms were offered to Holkar and Sindhia. But he could not strictly return to the old position ; as the Nizam was refused to be released from subsidiary alliance, and despite the efforts of the Directors the treaty of Bassein with the Peshwa was not cancelled.

In the time of Lord Minto the efforts to go back to the policy of non-intervention received a serious set-back. As Lord Curzon wrote : "Coming out to pursue the policy of peaceful isolation which had been unsuccessfully practised by his immediate predecessors, he soon found himself driven into course which even Wellesley would have approved."³ Minto intervened, for the sake of putting

1. Wellesley's, *Despatches IV*, p. 177.

2. Mehta Dr M.S., *Lord Hastings and the Indian States 1930*, p. 2.

3. Curzon, *British Government in India*, p. 184.

an end to anarchy, to help Berar without any obligation to do so, against the attack of Amir Khan a rebellious Pathan Chief in 1809. Amritsar treaty of 1909 was signed with Ranjit Singh forcing him to limit his political activities in the trans-Sutlej territories and over the cis-Sutlej states the British protection was extended. Envoys were sent to the Amirs of Sind and to Afghanistan, and treaties were concluded with these powers as well to stave off impending French attack on India. And the French colonies of Mauritius and Bourbon were captured.

The treaties signed with the Sikhs, the Afghans and the Amirs of Sind were, however, based on the principle of mutual equality, and despite the above quoted views of Lord Curzon, we may agree with Dr Mehta that "while it is true that during Minto's time some chiefs of Bundelkhand and the Sikh states south of the Sutlej had been taken under British protection, the latter with the object of setting up a barrier against the rising power of Ranjit Singh, the position remained substantially the same as had been determined by the treaties of 1805 and 1806."¹ And yet more, the Directors continued strictly to hold the view that the policy of non-intervention was the best.

On the whole, therefore, we may quote Lee-Warner again, "when the events of these 56 busy years are called to mind, the palpable anxiety of the company to end both annexations and alliances stands out in the clearest relief. There is the battle of Buxar in 1764 when Oudh lay at the feet of Major Munro, but was not annexed; the Rohilla War after which Warren Hastings conferred the conquered territories on the Wazir of Oudh. . ."² and other such distances which prove how the Company were determined to stick to the policy of non-intervention. In most of the treaties concluded during this period, at least theoretical equality is visible, which is conceded even in the treaties signed under Lord Wellesley.

Still, as it is obvious, with the passage of time the old policy of non-intervention was getting difficult to keep. The arguments Clive had forwarded for confining the British activities to Bengal were steadily losing force, and the successive Governor-Generals were finding it difficult to be tied up to it. At times significant departures from this policy were made, which could not be reversed despite the best efforts of the Directors, at Home. And the time was therefore fast approaching when a definite change in this policy had to be made. This happened in the time of Minto's successor, Lord Hastings, when the old policy of Ring Fence was definitely renounced, and the new policy usually termed as that of Subordinate Isolation was initiated. With the end of Minto's reign, one era thus ended.

1. Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

2. Lee-Warner, *op. cit.*, I, p. 52.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Vellore Mutiny

A few words with regard to certain other developments during Minto's time before we close. When Minto arrived in India repercussions of the Vellore Mutiny were still being heard. Vellore, a fortress in the Eastern Ghats, at a distance of about ninety miles from Madras, witnessed on 6 July 1806 an uprising of the Company's Indian sepoys in which about a hundred of the English officers and soldiers were killed.¹ The fortress itself fell under the control of these sepoys, though soon it was recovered by the British and complete order was restored. This mutiny was the first of its type, and it proved to be an eye-opener to the British who had made all their conquests in India with the help of the Indian sepoys, who knew that sufficient number of European soldiers just could not be had even to retain the vast territories that they had already acquired, and who became uneasy whether the loyalty of the Indian sepoys could now ever be depended upon. Much discussion took place about the character and causes of this mutiny which resembled that of 1857.

Like the mutiny of 1857, the Vellore uprising had the caste prejudices of the sepoys as its immediate cause. It was said to be essentially a 'whisker-shaving affair,' in which Sir John Craddock, the new Commander-in-Chief of Madras ordered through a Regulation that the sepoys should no more wear caste-marks on their foreheads when they came for parade, they should shave off their beard, and should have a uniform style of headgear. Lord William Bentinck who then was the Governor of Madras, did not find anything objectionable in these regulations, but the sepoy found them an offensive interference in their religious beliefs and refused to obey. They were subjected to Court-Martial and much stupid brutality which compelled them to break open in revolt. Want of prudence failed to let the authorities understand the pride of these men in their high castes and respectable connections. Both Bentinck and Craddock were censured, and had to resign their offices.

The cause of this mutiny, was as simple as above. The British knew it, yet arguments and counter-arguments were forwarded, and some said it had simply been engineered by the sons of Tipu Sultan, while others said that it was the French who had instructed the sepoys in revolutionary techniques. Total elimination of the Indians from administrative posts, a general Muslim conspiracy to overthrow the British rule, conquest of too vast territories without leaving much under the Indian control, and the zeal of the Baptist missionaries at Serampore who openly vilified the Indian religions, were some other causes forwarded for the mutiny; and the apologists of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief asserted that there was in fact a well

1. See Embree Ainslie, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

organised plot which simply made use of the innocent regulations to break open against the English rule.

Be that as it may, Lord Minto benefited from all these arguments and took certain necessary precautions against such recurrences. He put restrictions on the activities of Serampore missionaries against the wishes of Charles Grant, the Chairman of the Court of Directors. Objection was also raised to the Company appointing priests of the Jagannath Temple and collecting the pilgrim tax, though no decisive step in this connection was immediately taken.

White Mutiny

Repercussions of the Vellore Mutiny were still being felt, when in the summer of 1808, suddenly a 'White Mutiny' took place in the Madras army, in which the English officers refused to obey the orders of the Madras government. Their grievance was the refusal of the Home authorities to appoint their Commander-in-Chief as member of the Madras Council, and restrictions against the officers taking commissions on supplies furnished to their troops. They blamed their new Governor, Barlow for such slight put on them, and therefore started disobeying the orders of his government. The reaction of Barlow, however, was prompt. He required the officers immediately to sign declarations of loyalty to the government at the risk of suspension from their services. Large number of the officers fell in line, while some who still persisted in their intransigence, were suspended. Within two months complete order was restored, and the British were saved from a possible civil war and anarchy. After this Barlow showed leniency, and tried to remove the legitimate grievances of the officers. In all this Minto gave him his full support.

Revenue Reforms

Certain revenue reforms were also introduced by Lord Minto. Permanent Settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis, suffered from many defects, as already discussed. The Directors in England were not in favour of extending it to newly acquired territories in the north and in the south. This was due to adverse comments on that system by a land commission appointed by Barlow, which submitted its report on 13 April 1808. The Directors were anxious to enhance their income, which was not possible in a system which made settlement in perpetuity, and in which middle men like zamindars, farmers and their agents, etc. shared the revenue all of which should have gone to the government. Munro, a revenue authority, convinced the directors of the benefits of a periodical settlement direct with ryots, the tillers of the land. The Directors therefore, in their letters of 27 February 1811 and 27 November 1811, forbade permanent settlement any more. They sent a definite scheme to this effect in

June 1813, which however could be implemented only in the time of Minto's successor, as shortly after this he retired. During his time, however several experimental measures like a settlement with panchayats or headmen of the village who collected revenues from the tillers were performed, which worked for varying periods of three, five or more years.¹

Certain other reforms of his time in this connection were, the Regulation XIII of 1811 which authorised individual members of the Board of Revenue to be deputed to outlying districts where with all the powers of the Board vested in them, they could supervise revenue settlements and activities of the revenue officials.

Under Regulation V of 1812, the system of the grants of pattaas by zamindars to the tenants was reformed of some abuses, the tenants were given greater protection in cases of distraint on account of arrears of rent, and against enhancement of rent in cases where land passed into the hands of new purchasers.

The system of inland duties and sea customs was also reformed. There were certain serious defects in the existing system, under which search houses and custom houses were placed at short distances where merchants were harassed and made to pay illegal gratifications to appease the petty customs officials. Prices of goods due to such reasons rose which discouraged free trade and increased burden on the consumers. Minto passed Regulation IX of 1810 under which the inland custom houses were completely re-organised, and were placed in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under the Board of Revenue, while those in the newly acquired territories were put under a Board of Commissioners. The custom-collectors and their deputies received duties which were paid only once while passing through the Company's territories, and they also issued *Rowannahs* to the Merchants for one year, subject to their renewal thereafter, in which goods being carried were mentioned and checked by custom-posts at short distances so that there was no smuggling. Articles of daily use did not have any duty. The imported articles received the *Rowannahs* at Calcutta, Chittagong and Balasore on payment of custom. An authorised book of rates was prepared, copies of which were placed at every custom-house or a chowki where those desiring, could have their verifications.

Judicial Reforms

Regulation XIV of 1810 dealt with some judicial reforms. Under it the zilla and city magistrates were given greater powers to *release prisoners on bail, pending their trial in the circuit courts established by Cornwallis. Before this innocent persons often suffered*

1. For further details see Bakshi, S.R., *British Diplomacy and Administration in India*, pp. 158-68. Also see reforms under Lord Hastings.

long confinements, simply because they were suspects and had to await the trial till the circuit court met at the district headquarters. Under regulation XVI of 1810, assistant and joint magistrates were appointed to despatch public business which was mounting.

Police

Regulation IX of 1808 was aimed at strengthening the power of police. Under it, the landlords and other chiefs could be apprehended on mere suspicion of their being neglectful or in connivance with robbers. Some new superintendents of police were appointed with enhanced powers, and any resistance to the execution of warrants by police was declared to be a crime punishable by law.

Education

Minto was an Orientalist who added five thousand rupee-worth Arabic and Persian books to the library of the Fort William College, patronised some foreign languages like Malay and Burmese, and prepared the ground for the provision of funds in the Charter Act of 1813, for the public education. He also introduced certain postal reforms in the country.

Press

Minto, however, was no lover of the freedom of Press. Under him, writes Kaye, "this dread of the free diffusion of knowledge became a chronic disease...It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness."¹ Lord Minto's strictness against the freedom of Press is revealed by an incident. It is said that the British Resident at Hyderabad secured a printing press for the Nizam, and when this came to the knowledge of Minto, he severely rebuked him for having placed such explosive stuff in the hands of a native prince. The Resident, writes Thompson, "hastened to defend himself, saying that the Nizam had shown no interest in it and that, if the supreme government wished, he could sneak into the state *tosha khana* and secretly sabotage the press forever."²

"An active and ambitious man, with considerable scholastic and literary taste, Minto was a discerning politician and diplomat and an energetic administrator...He did well in India, putting its finances in order and devoting himself to extending and strengthening "British influence, more by peaceful than by aggressive methods", thus writes Viscount Mersey.

1. Kay, *Life of Metcalfe*, II, p. 245.
2. Thompson, *Lord Metcalfe*, p. 317.

Early in 1813, Minto was suddenly recalled to make room for Marquess of Hastings. "Well over sixty, and still suffering from the effects of the Jawa expedition, he arrived in England in May 1814, and a month later died of a chill while on his way to Scotland. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. He left several children; his great-grandson, the 4th Earl, was Viceroy of India just a century later."¹

3. Mersey, Viscount, *The Viceroy and Governors-General of India 1757-1947*, London, 1949, pp. 39-40.

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